

**The Value of Theological Reciprocating Relationships within Faculty Pedagogy as response
to Student Mental Health in Christian Higher Education**

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty of

Evangelical Theological Seminary in partial fulfillment

of the requirements

for the degree of Doctor of Theology

by

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May 2022

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Certified, that the work contained herein is my own, except where noted and cited.

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Certified, that the work contained herein has been conducted ethically, within the parameters of the institutional review process, to the best of our knowledge, and is appropriate for fulfilling the objectives of the Doctor of Theology dissertation.

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Abstract

The experiences of faculty are not significantly represented in the existing literature of college student mental health concerns within Christian higher education; therefore, this study sought to explore the impact of college student mental health on faculty pedagogy. Using a grounded theory qualitative research methodology, the researcher interviewed thirteen faculty participants about their experience of college student mental health in the classroom. A review of the literature on theological anthropology, trauma, and Christian higher education provided a framework for the findings of this study to be discussed. The main themes that emerged from the study were the value of relationship for pedagogy, lowered student engagement with pedagogy, increased mental health accommodations for pedagogy, and the impact of faculty well-being on pedagogy. As a result of these themes, the following recommendations for improving relational pedagogy were provided: Restoring a sense of faculty well-being by providing spaces and opportunities to reflect; restoring sense of vocation among faculty; and introducing trauma-informed strategies for faculty pedagogy.

“Up until the last 10 years, when I would interact with students, I would come alongside a student at a relational level, being a person with somebody, just living life together as people created in the image of God. Now, that has totally changed... now it’s all about mental health awareness as I walk into the classroom”.

- Sam, Lavender University

Chapter 1

Introduction

Over the years, educators have needed to rapidly adjust their reliance upon pedagogy to accommodate the increasing demands of a new generation, cultural context, and ever-evolving measures of defined success within education. When thinking specifically about the professoriate role, much is at stake as professors engage with young adults exploring life’s deep questions – what their vocation is, who they want to be, and what they believe. Faculty are integral to this identity formation process in their students, whether they are mindful of this influence or not in their daily teaching routines.

The relationship between teacher and learner, or faculty and student, holds significance for the mutual learning that occurs in college classrooms as faculty and student act as co-learners in whatever discipline is being explored (Clark, Johnson, and Sloat, 1991). The role of pedagogy is important for informing and shaping the impact faculty can have on a student’s well-being, beyond just their academic learning. However, there are challenges that arise which interrupt the learning relationship, such as a college student’s mental health. College student mental health concerns continue to be a pressing topic for all campus constituents to consider as they welcome a new cohort of students each year. For faculty, there is an increasing need to consider the impact

of mental health as it relates to a student's ability to engage classroom content and succeed academically (McMurtie, 2022).

Tied to the important role of faculty is Christian higher education's enduring commitment to the integration of faith and learning as evidenced by the mission statements promoting a Christ-centered education within many small, Christian, liberal arts institutions (CCCU.org). Faith and learning serve as cornerstones to the formation promised to college students enrolled at these institutions. Additionally, Christian institutions call their constituents to abide by certain values during their educational journey by living in accordance with the theological commitments held by their institution's faith background.

These theological commitments point to the distinctive pedagogy of Christian higher education. Theological anthropology, or the biblical understanding of what it means to be human (Harrison, 2010), provides a guide for intentional engagement with faith-based pedagogy for faculty and students on Christian campuses, affirming the integration of faith and learning at a deeper theological level. Yet college student mental health concerns bring a disruption to the vision of integrated faith and learning as students are arriving to campus with greater levels of anxiety, depression, and experienced trauma (Davidson, 2017; Cox, Dean, and Kowalski, 2015; Bohannon, Clapsaddle & McCollum, 2019). Trauma's neurological impact manifests through the body in ways that directly affect student learning (van der Kolk, 2014; Dana, 2018; Badenoch, 2008). Not only does trauma interfere with a student's learning, but their spiritual lives are also disrupted as their mind, body, and soul seek safe connections (Stephens, 2020).

Co-curricular departments engage college student trauma through their designated roles on campus as support service departments, often receiving extensive training in how to care well

for these students. As research continues to explore student mental health, the area of the college classroom has become a newer area of interest as it relates to trauma-informed care (Gross, 2020). Placing faculty at the forefront of students' academic experience means faculty are also entering the front lines of student mental health care (Flaherty, 2021; Gallimore, Braun, & McLaughlin, 2019). How do faculty understand their role when it comes to caring for students' mental health in the midst of their existing roles as educators? Desiring to meet faculty in the unknown of this question, this study seeks to understand the experiences of faculty, and specifically how student mental health concerns have affected their pedagogy.

Research Question

Pedagogy describes the “art, science, or profession of teaching” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021). The dictionary definition implies a significant element of intentionality by describing teaching as a craft, skill, or dedicated level of study behind the art of teaching. Faculty have devoted much to their craft, but in recent years institutions of higher education have needed to reassess how to deliver a faith-based education to a new generation of students. The recent pandemic significantly challenged institutions to adjust their educational models quickly. In particular, residential teaching faculty were required to reinvent their course offerings to meet the needs of a suddenly virtual classroom, which may impact future pedagogical changes. Affirmed by a special publication from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2021), the rapid shift to a virtual classroom did not allow many faculty to cultivate a deep and meaningful pedagogy for these radically different methods of course delivery.

The demands placed on faculty by their evolving roles in college student well-being prompts a curiosity to understand the faculty teaching experience, specifically as it relates to faculty observations of student mental health as presented in the classroom learning

environment. This study seeks to explore the question: What is the impact of student mental health on faculty pedagogy in Christian higher education classrooms? The intent of this study will aim to capture a representation of faculty observations about how they have adapted their particular pedagogy through the growing need to expand student care, including into the classroom setting.

Objectives of Research

The long-term aim of this research is to utilize the findings to equip faculty as they develop educational relationships with their students, whose mental health concerns may be interfering with their learning. In order to reach this aim, the following objectives will guide all research efforts in forming the desired outcome. The proposed research question will hold with it the sub-categories listed below as objectives:

1. To provide a review of the literature and existing research on the topic.
2. To understand faculty experiences and pedagogy as it relates to college student mental health concerns through a qualitative research process.

These objectives are meant to support the primary research question as additional context to help inform and shape the research process, specifically guiding the chosen methodology as well as focusing the participants' responses to a specific area of their lived experience as faculty members. This research question is developed out of a realized need in the field to study the intersection of college student mental health with faculty pedagogy. A review of the literature will help to frame the need for this research.

To be human is to be a particular being in relationships, distinct and unique, yet inseparably bound up with the other. (King, 2010, p.224)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

For the purposes of this study, the literature review will provide a foundational understanding of the theological, psychological, and educational contexts related to the impact of college student mental health concerns on faculty pedagogy. Specifically, the literature review will help to explore the theological implications for Christian higher education as it relates to the value of faculty understanding around the topic of college student mental health.

Historical Principles for Christian Education

Historically, theology has served as a foundational layer to the formation of modern day Christian higher education. There is a rich history of teaching and education as valued methods for the passing on of core faith doctrines and practices within early Christianity. A helpful example of the early integration of faith with education is the model of catechesis. The term *catechesis* represents the overarching efforts of the church for a person's faith formation process. Described by Dockery & Morgan (2018), catechesis represented the process by which, "God's people were habitually engaged in mutually formative processes that integrated every aspect of life as church, a family, and a Christian in the world" (p.368). The early church's educational approach to teaching a way of life, or catechesis, for Christians provides roots for what contemporary Christian higher education seeks to instill in its graduates (Marsden, 1997).

The catechism, eventually becoming catechumen classes, were formed out of the early church's desire to pass down the core beliefs and practices of faith to the next generation (Pazmiño, 2018). In its original state, catechesis was practiced by echoing, or repeating, another's words and deeds, making oral repetition a key component of the catechumen (Westerhoff, 1981). The aim of the early church for the catechumen was to preserve "the true teachings of Christ and the apostles...in the face of error and opposition" (p.47, Clark, Johnson, and Sloat, 1991). Understanding the educational role of catechism in the early church helps to provide a beginning framework for what makes Christian higher education distinct from secular models of higher education.

Another aspect of early faith education was the concept of *paideia*. A community or culture would determine collectively what "constituted human excellence" as a reflection of that particular culture's shared values but also representative of the individuals forming the collective (Pazmiño, 2018). Providing additional context, Jaeger (1961) explains how the Greek understanding of *paideia* was used by the Apostle Phillip to reveal Christ to their culture. Jaeger (1961) states that, "the classical *paideia* is being superseded by making Christ the center of a new culture" (p.12). In summary, the early apostles used the concept of *paideia* as understood by Greek culture to help spread the gospel of Christ, presenting it as the "new culture" to be shared. The connection of *paideia* to the discussion of Christian education is made with the recognition of contemporary educational methods which refer to the historical understanding of the term. The notion of human excellence transforming into *paideia* as an overarching term meant to represent educational excellence.

The Paideia Proposal (Adler, 1982) was written in an effort to advocate for a return to the prioritization of education for all, not just for the elite or privileged. Adler (1982) calls for five

core values within the work. The first is that all children can learn, or are educable. The second is the understanding that education is a lifelong process and it not complete upon the culmination of formal education. Adler's third assumption, which highlights the importance of relationship for learning, is that learning is based on the activity in the mind and is only assisted by the teacher. Fourth, Adler names the importance of acknowledging many styles of learning and forms for teaching. Lastly, Adler states that the aim of education cannot be solely about preparing a student to obtain a job that provides an income.

The principles of the Paideia Proposal (Adler, 1982) provide a structural context for the integration of this concept into the conversation on Christian higher education. The values of Christian institutions work in relationship with the components presented by the paideia proposal (Adler, 1982), despite those concepts not being formed with a faith-based approach. Seeking to graduate students who are not only prepared for their vocation, but have been equipped to move through post-graduate life with a Christian worldview as whole people, meets the aims of Christian higher education. Speaking specifically to the role of faculty's influence in students' spiritual lives, Dockery and Morgan (2018) write, "We can help students confront their previous misunderstandings and begin to see that their collegiate life is not merely preparation for a future vocation but a life of worship and of being conformed to Christ in the here and now" (p. 381).

Pazmiño (2018) speaks to the theological importance of Christian higher education for which an articulated *paideia* within a faith community helps communicate "a vision for excellence within that community that directs the process of forming character and chastening and nurturing persons" (p.140). Early in the history of Christian education, the core tenants of faith and learning are being formed through the practices of education and teaching for the purposes of faith formation.

The integration of faith and learning served as the mission for the earliest colleges, like Harvard and Yale (Rudolph, 1990, Ringenberg, 2006). Harvard began with the mission “to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life, and therefore to lay Christ in the bottom as the only foundation of all sound knowledge and learning” (as cited in Ringenberg, 2006, p.38). As higher education secularized over the course of time, many institutions remained committed to their religious roots in identity and praxis, despite the growing trend to secularize. The secularization of higher education was prompted by societal shifts, as society became less affirming of Christian faith and accepted new and emerging ideas on faith. So followed institutions of higher education. Ringenberg (2006) helpfully summarizes the “marks of secularization” with the following list:

- The public statements about the Christian nature of the institution begin to include equivocal rather than explicit phrases; these statements often describe Christian goals in sociological but not theological terms.
- The faculty hiring policy begins to place a reduced emphasis upon the importance of the scholar being a committed Christian, and subsequently fewer professors seek to relate their academic disciplines to the Christian faith.
- The importance of the Bible and the Christian religion in the general education curriculum declines.
- The previously strong official institutional support given to religious activities in general and the chapel service in particular declines.
- The institution begins to reduce and then perhaps drop its church affiliation or, if it is an independent institution, it tends to reduce its interest in identifying with interdenominational and parachurch organizations.

- Budget decisions begin to reflect a reduced emphasis upon the essential nature of Christian programs.
- An increasing number of students and faculty members join the college community in spite of, rather than because of, the remaining Christian influences, and the deeply committed Christian students begin to feel lonely. (p. 121)

Ringenberg's list inversely provides helpful guidance on the core values pursued by Christian higher education as he indicated the lack of these practices serve as the marker for secularization of the institution. The reasons drawing colleges and universities away from their religious foundations related to the growing American debate around the separation of Church and State, as well as growing interests to embrace broader worldviews which would allow for expansion into different values and belief systems (Ringenberg, 2006). The Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU) now exists as a collective of those institutions which have continued to operate as institutions dedicated to religious education, pursuing the model of integrated faith and learning for their students. How was it that these institutions were able to remain steadfast to their religious values in the midst of a changing society?

Distinctly Christian. Christian higher education has committed to advancing a Christ-centered education for its constituents, seeking to provide care for students spiritually, emotionally, and physically as well as academically. As evidenced by the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities' mission, Christian higher education seeks to "transform lives by faithfully relating scholarship and service to biblical truth" (CCCCU.org). The integration of faith and learning is what makes Christian liberal arts institutions unique in their educational model as faculty are encouraged, if not required, to incorporate faith perspectives within their respective disciplines. Additionally, the theological underpinnings of Christian campuses are integral to the

academic pursuits on these campuses. James K.A. Smith (2013) explains that a Christian university is held at the intersection of “two ecosystems,” that of the Church and that of higher education. Smith writes, “It is precisely this hybridity that generates the unique mission and task of Christian higher education” (p.4). Addressing the intersection of the commitments of Christian higher education, Smith (2009) presents the formative responsibility of these universities,

The university is not just out to deposit information in our heads with a view to professional success; rather, the university can’t help but be a formative institution because of powerful liturgies that shape our identity and self-understanding. In short, the university is not only...about knowledge. It is, I suggest, after our imagination, our heart, our desire. It wants to make us into certain kinds of people who desire a certain *telos*, who are primed to pursue a particular vision of the good life. (p. 112-113)

Imagining the work of Christian higher education as formative practice heightens the responsibility of its constituents to engage this call. Students and faculty are called to embrace these processes of formation in the midst of their teaching and learning.

Faculty serve as facilitators of the faith and learning curriculum in their roles as educators. Traditionally, professors provide students with the pedagogical component of the faith and learning integration, allowing their faith to inform and guide the methods used to present their disciplines to students. Often referred to as “mentoring figures” in the higher education literature, faculty hold the opportunity to influence the whole-person formation of their students (Dockery and Morgan, 2018; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt, 2005; Parks, 2011).

Aligning with the communal components reflected in the *paideia*, in which education is for everyone, faculty and students on Christian campuses can often be in agreement in their

awareness of engaging as a “community of learners,” identifying the reciprocal educating that can be experienced between student and professor (Dockery & Morgan, 2018). However, this model may not differ from secular models of pedagogy as developing the whole person is not solely a religious idea. Therefore, understanding the theological roots behind the valuing and striving for whole person development within Christian higher education marks the distinct nature of this desired pedagogy on Christian campuses.

Theological Anthropology: A Framework for Christian Higher Education

Theology engages the faith development of students, inviting faculty to connect their disciplines to the doctrinal roots of their institutions’ faith affiliations. The integration of psychology with theology offers understanding within the landscape of Christian higher education, especially as it relates to college student mental health concerns and implications for faculty pedagogy.

Within higher education, student development theory serves as a launching pad for student care as faculty and staff can refer to developmental stages in an effort to inform their offerings for students. For example, Erikson’s (1968) stages of development can provide markers for identifying how a student is understanding classroom content based on the descriptive stages aligning with their displayed behaviors in physical, emotional, and mental development. Within Erikson’s (1968) theory is the identification of the developmental crisis. The “dissonance, disequilibrium, and anxiety associated with the crisis create a need within the individual to do something to resolve the issue” (Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito, 1998, p. 32). The invitation for theological formation and exploration presents itself as faculty meet students in the midst of these developmental crises.

Parks (2000) describes the faculty member as a spiritual guide for students, stating that “an educator-professor is one who leads out toward truth by professing his or her intuitions, apprehensions, and convictions of truth, in a manner that encourages dialogue with the emerging inner authority of the student” (p. 167). Recognizing the spiritual lives of students, as integrated with their learning, names a distinctive factor of Christian higher education and the faculty who teach in such institutions. The theological foundations of these institutions provide a guide for spiritual development as students explore their faith alongside their learning during the college years, also referred to as the emerging adult years (Balswick, King, Reimer, 2016). The significance of integrating the study of psychology with theology is the opportunity for a holistic understanding of students, resonating with the whole person education aims of Christian higher education. The integration of these disciplines is supported by the growing investment in more contemporary cross-discipline intersections – for example, the study of neurotheology.

Neurotheology sets out to understand the human mind, brain, religion and theology for the purposes of improving the human condition as it relates to health, well-being, and spirituality (Newberg, 2018). The study of neurotheology seeks to “determine the brain areas associated with various psychological disorders that are also associated with changes attributed to various religious and spiritual practices and beliefs” (p.130, Newberg, 2018). The correlation between spiritual practices and brain functioning holds significance in the continued effort to understand college student mental health concerns on Christian campuses, as the integration of faith with their learning persists as the core aim of these institutions. Affirming this concept, Mohandas (2008) conducted a study to explore the interactions of spirituality with neurobiology. The study found that spiritual practices, such as meditation, had positive impacts on the brain, compared to the effects of anxiety-reducing drugs (Mohandas, 2008). Newberg (2018) seeks to name the

ways in which theology informs psychology through the impact of religious belief and practice on the brain in his continued research efforts.

More broadly, a Christian worldview significantly alters and informs the psychological approach when it comes to responding to those experiencing trauma or mental health needs. McMinn (2011) highlights the central aim for Christian psychologists as acknowledging one's own brokenness when he writes, "The Christian gospel gives hope for broken people, but only after they recognize their brokenness" (p.19). The difference between the Christian psychologist worldview and that of the secular psychologist is that God is the one to heal the brokenness and provide restoration. Psychology informs theology and vice versa as the human representation is named in the need for healing and the divine is invited into psychological processes established for healing.

Shults and Sandage (2006) state, "theology can help us understand spiritual experience, transformation, questions of God, while psychology helps us to develop models of spirituality that have empirical validity with respect to experiential and relational dynamics of the lived world" (p. 155). To be able to connect the lived experience with the spiritual through such areas of study provides a pragmatic way forward as Christian campuses seek to deliver on their promise of an integrated faith and learning pedagogy. The framework of theological anthropology provides a connecting vision for the importance of integrating a theological framework into faculty pedagogy. When both parties are able to truly see one another as human first, then secondly as professor and student, there is an honoring of the other person's story, experiences, and lens for which they are coming to the classroom each day. Inviting the divine into this honoring relationship introduces the beauty of theological anthropology as a framework

for pedagogy. The divine, who is living in relationship through the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – created humans to also be in relationship with the Trinity and with one another.

Theological Anthropology

The idea that a person's sense of self is formed by their relation to the other and their relationship to the divine holds great implications for Christian education. Specifically, viewing human development through a theological lens gives valuable insight to what makes Christian higher education pedagogy distinctly *Christian* in comparison with the pedagogies practiced within secular institutions. Theological anthropology is the biblical understanding of what it means to be human (Balswick, King, Reimer, 2016; Shults and Sandage, 2006; Shults, 2003, Harrison, 2010). Theological anthropology affirms that “we are distinct and particular beings” (King, 2016, p. 223), inviting relationship through a celebration of unity through diversity. Humans are all created in the *imago Dei*, providing a sense of unity, yet each human exudes their divine image through unique human identity. Harrison (2010) explains that the divine image is found “in many aspects of what we are, what we can and should do, and what we are called to become” (p.5). Humans are called to be in relationship with the divine, and reciprocate that relationship with others.

If faculty are to model the deep theological beliefs held in their pedagogy, then there is a need to consider the importance of theological anthropology, specifically as it relates humans to being created in the image of God and what these truths may mean for educational relationship of professor and student. Specific to the nature of faculty and student interactions at Christian higher education institutions is an awareness of relationality between professor and student as integral for the dissemination of these faith and learning principles. Therefore, a helpful culmination of psychology, theology, and relationality is necessary. The concept of the

reciprocating self provides a foundation for faculty and student learning relationships (Shults and Sandage, 2006; Balswick, King, and Reimer, 2016).

Reciprocating Self

The reciprocating self is presented by Shults and Sandage (2006) as a development *teleology*. The developmental *teleology* is an understanding that “God’s intention for human development is for us to become particular beings in relationship with the divine and human other” (p.55). Shults and Sandage (2006) describe relationships as inviting the model of a reciprocating self when:

- 1) Personal relationships are characterized by covenant commitment rather than conditional commitment;
- 2) The response to failure in relationship is characterized by gracing rather than shaming;
- 3) Persons in relationship use their power, giftedness, and recourse to empower rather than to control the other; and
- 4) The relationship is characterized by an openness that can lead to intimacy rather than isolation (p. 57).

Adding further to the defining conversation of reciprocating self, Balswick, King, and Reimer (2016) elaborate on the inclusion of the *imago Dei* in relation to human development as they explain the reciprocating self. The complexity of the *imago Dei* requires greater definition that will also add value to the overarching significance of the reciprocating self for this study. Scripturally, the image of God is detailed within the Old Testament. Most commonly referenced is the Genesis 1:26-28 (NSRV) text, which reads,

²⁶Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps the earth.”²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In the New Testament, Christ is the *imago Dei*, serving as the perfect image of God as Christ lives and ministers on earth. Sands (2010) relates this important distinction of the *imago Dei* back to the reciprocating self by explaining, “The *imago Dei* is a communal reality. Renewal in the image unites one with others in community” (p.31). As humans are created according to the image of God, they must experience this image of God in relationship with the other.

Summarizing the *imago Dei* and reciprocating self, as humans are in mutual relationship with God, they are also to be in mutual relationship with others, creating the basic components of the reciprocating self. The reciprocating self is not linear, which holds implications of time for a person’s developmental journey as well. As Cooper-White (2011) states, formation is rather “a circle or spiral in which meanings are made, changed, remade, and regathered in dynamic relational with persons, groups, and cultures, past, present, and in potential” (p.63). Thinking about the pathways of students’ experiences during their time on Christian campuses, the affirmation to embrace a non-linear experience of formation seems to align well with the hope to see students graduate as an end goal, and the diverse paths and timelines to graduation being celebrated.

For the purposes of this study, the reciprocating self helps to represent the value within Christian higher education of developing students holistically. Described by Palmer (1993) as

whole person education, which he states as “the goal of knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds” (p.8). The notion of restoring or “reconstructing” students to whole beings represents a need for a psychological understanding – knowing how the mind, brain, and body play a role in restoring – as well as a theological understanding of restoration, both in the context of relationship.

Further affirming the need for relationship in the process, McMinn (2011) writes, “relational views in theology and psychology assert that humans are at their best in the context of close, confiding relationships” (p. 68). This being true, how might one understand the pragmatic engagement of a theological anthropology for Christian higher education pedagogy?

The African philosophy of “Ubuntu” helps to represent the idea of the reciprocating self as it claims, “I am because you are” (Paulsen, 2020), or “a person is a person through other persons” (Sindorf, 2018. p.281). The implications held within this framework provide a much deeper value statement for what is at stake with the commitment of Christian higher education to guide students through their education in a faith context. As faculty think about their response to their students in relationship, an invitation of the divine becomes essential in order to capture the fullness of the theological anthropology as a framework for pedagogy.

Divine relationship. Within theological anthropology, the concept of humans being created in the imago Dei, or image of God, holds a call for humanity to live relationally with each other and Christ. Highlighting an important distinction within theological anthropology, Balswick, King, and Reimer (2016) explain the important passage most commonly referenced for the imago Dei, Genesis 1:26-28, was traditionally interpreted as an individual account, but over the last century, developing studies of the Trinity produced a relational interpretation of the

image Dei. The relationship of the Trinity highlights a perfect “reciprocity” between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, “where the three live with and for each other” (Balswick, King, and Reimer, 2016, p. 36). In his famous painting the holy trinity, Rublev depicts the relationality of the Trinity through three angels facing toward one another.



Figure 1: Rublev: the icon and the holy trinity (as cited in Reimer, 2008)

The posture of the angels is distinct as Rublev sought to avoid a hierarchal posture and chose rather to highlight how the three “perfectly relate to one another, creating a cycle of perfect love” (Reimer, 2008, p. 173). Affirming the celebration of diversity within the Trinity, Rublev purposely differs the attire of each angel to highlight that “they are one, their mission is one, centered on salvation, but their tasks are different.... They each play a different role...they ‘promote’ each other” (Reimer, 2008, p. 174). The relationality represented in Rublev’s work not only presents the communion of the Trinity but also draws the observer to be reminded of their unique role in the communion as one created in the *imago Dei*. Humans being created in the

image of a Trinitarian God celebrates the call placed on humanity “to an unending process of becoming more and more like God, especially by sharing God’s character and God’s love” (Harrison, 2010, p.6). These theological foundations inform the theological anthropological framework that hold significance for Christian faculty pedagogy.

Christian Pedagogy: Faith and Learning

While the pursuit of a whole person education serves as a core component of Christian higher education, this model is not uniquely Christian; secular institutions also pursue a similar model, as evidenced by a shared appreciation of student development theories that call for whole person engagement (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt, 2005). Therefore, breaking down the faith and learning paradigm helps to give further context to the core values of Christian higher education, and how the theological frameworks of reciprocating self, *imago Dei*, and the divine Trinitarian relationship inspire a deeply relational pedagogy.

Cautioning Christian higher education against the temptation to only focus on learning, James K.A. Smith (2009) calls for Christian colleges and universities to be concerned more with *formation* than solely *information* through the inclusion of passions, or desires, in the learning context, providing an invitation to deep worship through education as one informs the other. Explaining this invitation further, Smith identifies *thin* and *thick* practices that inform a person’s formation. A *thin* practice consists of habits that do not connect to a person’s core desires. Using the example of brushing one’s teeth as a *thin* practice, Smith explains that there is not a connection between brushing one’s teeth and their identity leading one to think of oneself firstly as a “tooth brusher” (p.82). Alternatively, a *thick* practice relates to the habits that hold meaning for a person and do inform that person’s identity. Therefore, “*thick* habits often both signal and

shape our core values or our most significant desires” (p.82), which is where Smith would house the religious practices of formation.

The habits lived out by a student, like going to class each day, must connect to meaningful practices that align with the student’s desires in order to inspire that student’s formation and avoid education for the sake of *information*. James K.A. Smith (2009) provides a visual model of these experiences in a concentric circle composed of liturgies in the middle, practices in the second circle, and rituals in the outer circle. Thick habits are directly connected to the centermost circle, that of liturgies. Defining liturgies, Smith writes, “Our thickest practices...have a liturgical function insofar as they are a certain species of ritual practice that aim to do nothing less than shape our identity by shaping our desire for what we envision as the kingdom – the ideal of human flourishing” (p.87). In the pragmatic application of thick habits, Christian institutions of higher education have practices that would align with Smith’s (2009) description. The practice of holding a Chapel requirement on many Christian campuses is intended as a *thick* practice. However, if a student approached this opportunity as merely a box to be checked, then the student has made this a *thin* practice for themselves.

Similarly, Dockery and Morgan (2018) affirm that faith and learning “must remain in constant dialogue with one another, not merely coexisting side by side but truly influencing one another” (p.180). They advocate for the cultivation of a lifestyle as a teacher, not just knowledge transmission within the profession. The whole-person development of the student has been emphasized previously, but the development of the faculty is less so represented. Dockery & Morgan (2018) advocate for Christian higher education to include an emphasis on teacher formation in addition to student formation, developing beyond the mind to include the growth of “personality, character, and habits of heart and mind” (p. 155). Speaking to the efforts put forth

by Christian colleges and universities, Ringenberg (2006) names the historical context of faith and learning integration. Explaining the theme of faith and learning as the greatest emphasized theme of Christian higher education after 1970, Ringenberg (2006) highlights the effort made by campuses to “stimulate their faculty members to better achieve it” (p.193). In so doing, Christian faculty required a shift in their pedagogical approach with a need to focus on the formation of a student, and even of self, not just the transmission of knowledge within their discipline.

The role of the professor holds a long history aligning more with the transmission of knowledge to students and less emphasis on the formation processes within the primary pedagogy. A brief review of the historical context of the role of professor helps to shed light on the contemporary understanding of the faculty position in Christian higher education and also sets a stage for the importance of pedagogy.

Faculty Role in History of Higher Education Context

At the time of the earliest colleges, such as Harvard and Yale, those with ambitions to become clergy but for various reasons, were not able to fulfill the role would settle for what was considered the “less demanding profession of teaching” (Rudolph, 1990, p.159). The role of professor as it is understood in modern contexts was actually fulfilled by those known as tutors. Tutors were less respected by students and would teach a class of students rather than a specific subject, thus saving the college money as hiring instructors to teach in a specific discipline was more costly. In addition to saving money, tutors also took on a role that greatly affected “undergraduate discipline, morale, and respect for the course of study” (Rudolph, 1990, p.162). The role of the tutor faded out until Harvard, in 1767, decided to give tutors a topic to teach rather than a class cohort. Harvard’s change prompted “changing tutors into scholars with professional ambitions” (Rudolph, 1990, p.163).

Eventually, towards the end of the 19th century, a hierarchy was created of instructors, assistant professors, associate professors and professors – similar to today’s faculty structures. Changing the former tutor position into that of “instructor” invited a person to “join in a competitive race for rank, [as] the college had become a bureaucracy.... He was working his way up a ladder. One day he might be a professor” (Rudolph, 1990, p.163). Important to the purposes of this study is the original motivation of early instructors to pursue leadership positions in a ministerial context. Early professors at Harvard were recruited on the basis that they were serving a religious cause (Rudolph, 1990; Thelin, Edwards, Moyon, 2022).

As the history of higher education evolved and secularization entered the landscape, the role of professor became much more diversified, with many veering away from integrating faith into teaching (Ringenberg, 2006). The diversity to branch out from religious education stemmed from the sentiment that “instruction must be adapted to the state of the times, and to that of the world around” (Rudolph, 1990, p.167). Unique to Christian higher education was the commitment in 1970 to the integration principle, or the integration of faith and learning as previously discussed (Ringenberg, 2006). The renewal of faith and learning as the core philosophical construct for Christian higher education invited a necessary review of what was being taught, how it was being taught, and by whom the content was being taught. The pedagogy of Christian higher education was furthermore informed by the integration of faith and learning, shaping the modern pedagogies used in today’s Christian colleges and universities (Ringenberg, 2006).

Definition and Significance of Pedagogy at Faith-Based Institutions

Exploring the significance of pedagogy for Christian higher education provides an opportunity to further understand the valuable role faculty hold within these institutions. The

original Greek translation of pedagogy is “to lead the child,” which incorporated teaching the child manners and ways of being in the world (as cited in Shah, 2021, p.6). Modern definitions simply point to pedagogy as “the art and science of teaching” (Merriam-Webster, 2022).

Capturing a fuller image of more recent understandings of pedagogy, Shah (2021) explains that successful educators are not only abiding by the art and science of teaching but also act “as parents who understand the needs, abilities, and experiences of their students while also being trained in the best methods of communication and presentation of appropriate materials” (p.8). The naming of faculty as “parent” in Shah’s (2021) description may strike a chord of dissonance for those serving in the role.

Found in the relational components associated with Christian pedagogies exists a calming response to potential dissonance felt by faculty when being referenced as a parent figure. Parks (1986) speaks to the potential parent role reference in accordance with the faith development stage students are engaging upon starting college. Parks (1986) explains,

Since young adults are yet psychologically dependent upon competent leadership for their formation, higher education – self-consciously or consciously – serves the young adult as their primary community of imagination, within which every professor is potentially a spiritual guide and every syllabus a confession of faith. (p.143)

Parks continues to affirm not only the educational purpose but the value of faith integration for young adults with her eloquent description of the potential spiritual implications of Christian higher education.

Ernest L. Boyer (1990), an influential scholar in the discipline of education, refers to the connection that should be formed between a teacher’s knowledge and a students’ learning as

important pedagogy for “good teaching” (p.24). Boyer writes of the important practice for good teachers to be always reviewing their pedagogy and intentionally planning their procedures in line with their subject matter. Further affirming Boyer’s encouragement for intentional pedagogy, Barlett (2005) compares the banking model of education to a critical pedagogy model. In the banking model of education, the teacher “deposits” knowledge to students. Contrasting this model, critical pedagogy invites students and teachers to learn together “through dialogical theory of praxis and knowledge as a revised relationship between teacher and student” (Barlett, 2005, p.345).

Returning to the value of the reciprocating self for faculty-student interactions in Christian higher education classrooms, the nature of the critical pedagogy model shared by Barlett (2005) represents the shift away from pedagogy as simply knowledge-based. There is a formation component integrated. Smith (2013) names the shift in greater detail by stating how “pedagogies of desire form our habits, affections, and imaginations, thus shaping and priming our very orientation to the world. If Christian education is going to be holistic and formative, it needs to attend to much more than intellect” (p.13). If pedagogy serves as a home for the praxis of integrated faith and learning, faculty serve as the inhabitants of the home, providing the lived experience of pedagogy. Students' responses to and interactions with faculty are critical to pedagogical effectiveness.

Student-faculty interactions have been studied and proven to be an important element of the college learning and development experience (Cox and Orevochoc, 2007). In his review of the literature on informal student-faculty interactions, Lamport (1993) names academic achievement, satisfaction with college, and personal and intellectual development as areas that receive significant benefit from the relationships formed between student and faculty. Further affirming

the reciprocal relationship between faculty and student, student-faculty interaction continues to be a major indicator of student engagement on campuses. Student engagement being defined as the level with which a student involves themselves in their own learning – showing up to class, asking questions, responding to material are examples of engaged learning (Evans, Forney, and DiBrito, 1998).

Relational pedagogy. Helping to provide pragmatic context for the ways in which pedagogy can positively influence student faculty interactions, Shah (2021) discusses the differences between two pedagogical models, the pedagogy of teacher-centered model (PTCT) and the pedagogy of learner-centered model (PLCT). The teacher-centered pedagogy places the teacher at the center of the learning process, which “enhances teacher’s authoritative role...while it minimizes student’s choice and interaction” (Shah, 2021, p.17). On the other hand, the learner-centered pedagogy emphasizes activity, or participation for learning, where the learner is placed in the center of the learning process (Shah, 2021). For faculty, the opportunity to invite students into a pedagogy that is learner-centered could equally invite a greater opportunity for reciprocal learning as the teacher assists the learning while holding the student at the center of their learning.

Howard (2016) integrates the value of relationships for pedagogy in his transformationist model of pedagogy. This model postulates that at the core of pedagogy, an educator must hold the triad of 1) knowing self, 2) knowing students, and 3) knowing practice. Presented as a triangle, each point of the triangle represents an intersection for which Howard (2016) names a “doorway” for learning. At the intersection of knowing self and knowing students is the “doorway of relationship” (Howard, 2016). Defining what is meant by the student-teacher *relationship*, Howard affirms a professional relationship for which an educator communicates

well through word, action, and deed to their learners. In the transformationist pedagogy, an educator seeks to establish a safe connection by communicating to their students that

“I see you. I acknowledge your presence in this classroom. I know your name and I can pronounce it correctly. I respect your life experiences and recognize that they are different from mine. I believe in you and your intelligence, I will hold us both accountable to honor your capacity to learn, and I enjoy being in this work with you” (Howard, 2016, p.133).

A student’s mental health need or trauma may prevent them from receiving the faculty’s attempt to establish a safe connection through a transformationist model of pedagogy (Copeland, McGinnis, Bai, Adams, Nardone, Devadanam, Rettew, and Hudziak, 2021). Conversely, the benefits of relational pedagogy are threatened when an educator proceeds without knowing themselves, their students, or their practice, giving rise to an opportunity for mismeeting.

Pedagogical mismeetings. From a theological perspective, the exchange between faculty and student invites an openness toward one another, with the reciprocating self serving as an avenue of such openness. Buber (1988) parses out the importance of openness in an educator through using a comparison of approaches for influencing the worldview of others. The first approach describes the educator seeking to impose their ideas onto the learner without being attentive to the needs, perspectives, and opinions of the learner, thereby causing a “mismatching” (Trang, 1996). However, the second approach explains that the openness comes “not essentially by teaching, but by meeting, by existential communication between someone that is in actual being and someone that is in a process of becoming” (Buber, 1988, p.72). Faculty members encourage such “meetings” through relational pedagogy, with the reciprocal learning relationship

holding the greatest potential for meetings to occur. The disruption of this openness, or meeting, presents when various barriers disrupt a learning relationship. Before looking specifically at the barriers experienced by students as it relates to their mental health, there is a need to situate their experiences within a broader understanding of mental health and trauma.

Mental Health and Trauma

Mental health and trauma are terms that can often be intertwined, with one affecting the other and vice versa. Defining each term provides an initial distinction, but a further review of the effects of mental health and trauma on the body and mind demonstrate the entangled nature of these terms.

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (World Health Organization, 2022). Mental health is the phrase used to describe an individual’s well-being as it relates to social, physical, and emotional engagement with their world. The terms *mental health* and *mental illness* may sometimes mistakenly be used interchangeably. The Mayo Clinic (2022) distinguishes between the two by detailing, “many people have mental health concerns from time to time. But a mental health concern becomes a mental illness when ongoing signs and symptoms cause frequent stress and affect your ability to function” (para. 2).

Advocating towards needing a broader definition of mental health, Galderisi, et al. (2015), explains, “People in good mental health are often sad, unwell, angry or unhappy, and this is part of a fully lived life for a human being” (p.231). Also presenting a gap in the definition provided for good mental health, Fusar-Poli, et al. (2020) names the complexity of defining these

terms by sharing, “Individuals who do not suffer any mental disorder do not necessarily have good mental health.... Moreover, a certain degree of mental discomfort can be helpful for personal growth” (p. 35). Also hoping to broaden and offer a new definition of mental health, Galderisi, et al. (2015) puts forth the following definition for mental health:

Mental health is a dynamic state of internal equilibrium, which enables individuals to use their abilities in harmony with universal values of society. Basic cognitive and social skills; ability to recognize, express and modulate one’s own emotions, as well as empathize with others; flexibility and ability to cope with adverse life events and function in social roles; and harmonious relationship between body and mind represent important components of mental health which contribute, to varying degrees, to the state of internal equilibrium (p. 232).

The inclusion of relationship between mind and body as well as the value of relationship with others for mental health are particularly key distinctions worth noting in the exploration of faculty experiences of college student mental health.

Trauma

The variety and complexity of trauma in the human experience cannot be comparative – no two people will experience the same traumatic event equally (Menakem, 2017). Attempting to capture the complexity of defining trauma in a person’s life, Jones (2019) explains that, “The anatomy of trauma can leave one without a world, without speech, stories, memory, community, future, or a sense of self” (p.21). Described by Dana (2018), “Trauma interrupts the process of building the automatic circuitry of safe connection and sidetracks the development of regulations and resilience” (p. xvii). Trauma effects a person’s nervous system, altering their brain and body

function. Further explanation of trauma's impact within the brain and within the body provides a pragmatic understanding of the ways an individual is impacted by trauma.

Within the brain's structure, vertical and horizontal pathways are identified as pathways for the neuronal activity prompted by the brain's processing of an individuals' experience. The horizontal pathways consist of the left and right hemispheres of the brain. The vertical pathways are made up of the brainstem, limbic area, and cortex, which work together for emotional processing through the body (Badenoch, 2008). A commonly used visual for understanding the vertical pathways is the hand model (Siegel, 1999, 2007) found in Figure 1.

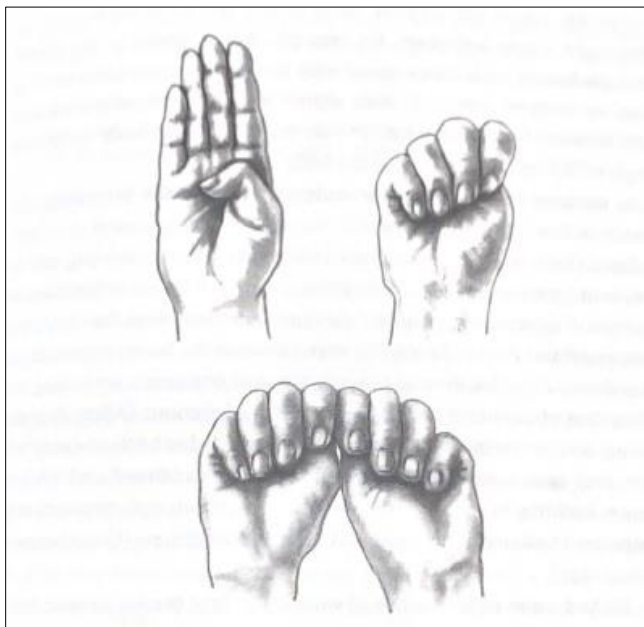


Figure 2: Hand Model of Brain (as cited in Badenoch, 2008).

The hand model represents the brain as follows: “The wrist represents the spinal cord, the lower palm is the brainstem, the thumb is the limbic region, and the back of the hand from wrist to fingertip is the cortex” (Badenoch, 2008, p. 13). The brain can be thought of as a command center of messages (neuronal signals), for which the main role of these integrating pathways is to

“code” and “translate” the signals, sending them to the appropriate pathways which produces meaning, or understanding, within the human mind (Siegel, 1999). However, if those pathways are blocked or interrupted due to experiences or events which cause the brain to enter into a flight, fight, or freeze response more permanently, the meaning-making can become jumbled, creating a fragmented memory, experience, or insecure attachment for the individual (Siegel, 1999; Dana, 2018). The brain’s response to trauma leads an individual to feel overwhelmed, with a strong sense of loss of control over their body (Yoder, 2005).

Offering a different visual for how a person might respond to trauma, McBride (2021) uses the image of a staircase with three steps. The first step in response to a perceived threat is named as “social engagement,” in which a person will “ask for help, seek support, or set a boundary” (p.61). The second step represents “mobilization,” which portrays the fight-flight response of the nervous system, making quick decisions based on what has helped the person survive in the past. The last step is “shutting down,” which may look like a person “losing consciousness, feeling a total drain of energy and becoming immobile, or going somewhere else in [their] minds” (McBride, 2021, p.62). As a person experiences these steps on the staircase, they may move up and down the staircase out of order depending on their mind and body’s wirings when it comes to sensing a threat. However, the end goal is the same, to return to the top of the staircase which presents the original state of safety.

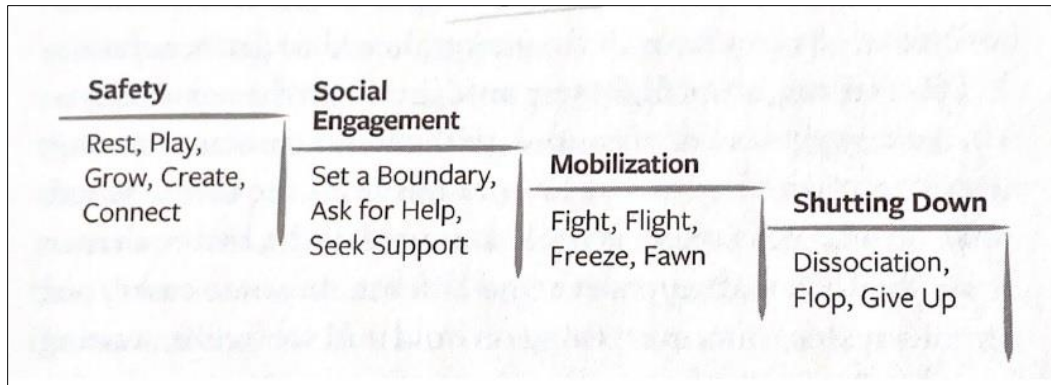


Figure 3: *The Staircase of Stress Response*, McBride, 2021, p.61.

McBride's (2021) model provides a helpful visual tool for faculty as they learn to understand the effects of trauma on a student's formation in the classroom, specifically in relation to the stressors prompted by their trauma. Helping to further clarify trauma, Yoder (2005) describes that, "Traumatic events differ from ordinary stress in intensity and/or duration.... Consequently, a traumatic reaction needs to be treated as valid, regardless of how the event that induced it appears to anyone else" (p.10-11). An important factor for faculty to consider in their evolving discernment around college student mental health in the classroom is the importance of allowing the student to name their trauma and not, as Yoder points out, allowing their own perceptions of the student's trauma to inform their response to that student.

With an understanding of the brain's processing of trauma, it is important to consider how the trauma messaging of the brain affects the body. Self-regulation helps to provide connection between the brain-body message and the implications of trauma's disruption to this connection. One's ability to self-regulate is a relationship between self and body. As described by Van der Kolk (2014), "If you have a comfortable connection with your inner sensations – if you can trust them to give you accurate information – you will feel in charge of your body, your feelings, and yourself" (p.98). A sense of safety is developed based on one's ability to self-

regulate. However, traumatic experiences create a sense of continual risk, causing one's body to shut down emotional responses. The body then begins to exhibit the unfelt experience of these emotions through symptoms such as neck pain, digestive problems, sleeping issues, headaches, and more (Van der Kolk, 2014). Van der Kolk (2014) is credited with coining a succinct yet poignant phrase capturing this phenomenon: "The body keeps the score." This phrase, which is also the title of his book, references the pent-up emotions not yet processed by the brain-body messaging due to trauma.

McBride (2021), in her recent work on wisdom of the body, provides a helpful summary list of trauma's impact on the brain-body connection. She explains that:

- The brain and body are not separate, but intimately connected and in constant dialogue.
- Our brain-body system is wired primarily for two things: survival and social connection.
- Stress and trauma responses are not inherently bad. In fact, they are necessary adaptive responses to things that threaten our survival/relationship drive.
- If we stay in survival responses for too long and without receiving help, our brains and bodies adapt, making it easier to remain in survival responses than to get out of them.
- We can heal. Our brain-body system is adaptive, and we can use safety cues and relationships to return to a state of rest. This takes time, but it is never too late. And because social connections are central to our survival, we can get back to safety more quickly when we engage the healing process in the context of relationship. (p. 56-57).

McBride's last point provides a necessary transition from trauma's effect to the healing of trauma. Foundational to the purpose of this study, McBride highlights the essential nature of

relationships for trauma healing. Relationship is important for trauma healing in part because of the brain's processing of another person.

Referring back to the brain model, the frontal lobes of the brain are where empathy is developed. Empathy is prompted in relationship through the brain's mirror neurons (Van der Kolk, 2014). An example of mirroring another can be seen when a group of people are sitting around a table, some will begin to mirror the actions or movements of another by sitting in a similar position or mirroring a facial expression of another. Van der Kolk explains that, "Trauma almost invariably involves not being seen, not being mirrored, and not being taken into account" (p.59). The reciprocating self continues to serve as a beneficial framework for the interactions of faculty engaging students with mental health needs, as the reciprocating self encompasses the components encouraged for trauma healing, including the benefits of mirroring for trauma healing.

Trauma Healing

While this study explores the impact of college student mental health on faculty pedagogy, and is not directly exploring the implications of trauma on faculty pedagogy, the broader framework is meant to establish correlations between the important integration of psychology and theology for pedagogy. Understanding the processes for healing from trauma adds to the valuable insights from these disciplines for informing faculty pedagogy.

While there is variety in trauma healing processes, Herman (1997) provides a commonly understood model highlighting three stages for which trauma healing can occur. Each of the stages, as Herman notes, are "an attempt to impose simplicity and order upon a process that is inherently turbulent and complex" (p.155). The first stage is a return to safety. Within this stage,

an individual needs to name their trauma and seek restored control, starting with the body and moving outward. They must then seek out a safe environment for which the individual will focus on regaining control over spaces, relationships and self-care.

The second stage presented by Herman (1997) is remembrance. Within this stage the individual engages their story of trauma. Traumatic memory differs from normal memory in that traumatic memory is “wordless and static,” while normal memory is simply telling a story (Herman, 1997, p.175). Because trauma fragments within the brain and body, retelling the story of trauma can prove difficult because an individual may not remember the order of events chronologically. As the individual remembers their trauma story, they are able to progress into the third stage of trauma healing.

In stage three, reconnection, the individual may now begin to think forward, inviting ideas and beginning to accept the idea of a future after trauma. Within this stage the individual “may choose to actively engage their fears” (Herman, 1997, p.197). Also within this stage, a shift toward focusing on “reconciling with oneself” (Herman, 1997, p.202) is explored by inviting the individual to think about their future. At this point in trauma recovery, the imagination is now restored, allowing an individual to lean into the person they want to become. Lastly, within this third stage, is a reconciliation to others, which is related mostly to the restoration of trust that was broken by trauma.

Understanding these important stages of trauma recovery helps to fuel the reciprocal relationship between self and others, as there is a recognition of empathy in seeing the brokenness and later healing in the other. Uniquely connected back to this study, faculty and students have the opportunity to mirror this reciprocal healing to one another as they open

themselves to see and be known by the other in the learning context. With the broader definitions of mental health and trauma provided, looking specifically at the landscape of college student mental health gives relevant insight into the necessity of further understanding the interactions of students and faculty in a learning relationship.

College Students and Their Mental Health

With an increase in student mental health needs on college campuses, the reciprocal relationship between professor and student may be interrupted due to the mental health needs and experiences of students. A variety of factors, most significant being mental health concerns, are presenting as hurdles on the path to graduation for students (Bohannon, Clapsaddle & McCollum, 2019). Research conducted on college student mental health demonstrated that 66% of college students experience “overwhelming levels of anxiety” and 45% indicated experiences of depression that “impeded their normal functioning” (admissionsly.com). In a study researching the mental health landscape of university students (N=43,048), researchers found that 52% of students have indicated receiving treatment for a mental health condition on campus (Eisenberg et al, 2018). Because of their findings, the same study recommended campuses intentionally include mental health care into daily campus life for the study, including “integrating consideration of mental health with academic advising or academic curricula on creative new ways” (Eisenberg et al, 2018, p. 85). Adding to the complexity of college student mental health trends, the COVID-19 pandemic heightened student mental health needs. A study polling 2,000 college students indicated that “one in five respondents reported that their mental health had significantly worsened during the pandemic” (Liu et al, 2020p. 1). Faculty and staff are often those serving on the front lines, observing and engaging the effects of these increased student mental health needs firsthand, whether in the classroom or residence hall. Faculty

specifically hold a valuable role in their response, as faculty are uniquely positioned to witness the academic implications faced by students struggling with mental health.

The mental health of college students covers a broad range of experiences from anxiety and depression to trauma. Additionally, students may hold different types of trauma, including examples such as generational trauma (Doucet and Rovers, 2010), collective trauma (Hirschberger, 2018), or secondary trauma (Gilbert-Eliot, 2020). Understanding how mental health needs and trauma can interrupt, or disrupt, a student's ability to function helps to frame the need for further research in how institutions can best aid faculty as they guide students' learning experience in the classroom. Fifty percent of college students are exposed to a potentially traumatizing event by their first year of college, which affirms the growing need for campuses to invest greater efforts in supporting student well-being as students arrive to campus (Davidson, 2017). Defining trauma and the impact of trauma to a student's experience helps to provide a foundational understanding of the current college student mental health trend.

The College Student

The current college student falls into the generational description of Gen Z (Seemiller and Grace, 2016), also referred to as iGen (Twenge, 2017). Born between the years of 1995 and 2010, Gen Z is the internet generation as they have always known and had access to the internet during their lifetime. Their experience of having knowledge at their fingertips changes their view of learning. For Gen Z, "Education is less about the transfer of knowledge from teacher to student and more about helping students make sense of the overabundance of information available to them" (Seemiller and Grace, 2016, p.201-202).

From a developmental perspective, Gen Z is marked as reaching adulthood slower than previous generations (Twenge, 2017; Balswick, King, And Reimer, 2016). Members of Gen Z also identify different markers for themselves in terms of what it means to reach adulthood. Rather than the markers of marriage, parenting or career accomplishments of past generations, Gen Z identifies adulthood as “accepting responsibility for one’s self and making independent decisions” (Balswick, King, and Reimer, 2016, p. 214).

This shift of timing and definition of adulthood can best be described developmentally as “emerging adulthood.” Arnett (2000) argues that the average college student, age 18-25, falls within this developmental stage of emerging adulthood. Balswick, King, and Reimer (2016) characterize emerging adulthood by “transition and variability, whereas adulthood is characterized more by commitment” (p.210). During this developmental stage, students may identify with the descriptors associated with this stage as being a time of identity exploration. Unique to the college experience, emerging adults tend to take a less linear path towards college completion, taking advantage of opportunities for work or part-time enrollment (Balswick, King, and Reimer, 2016) prior to graduating. In the context of Christian higher education, the emerging adult years also present a new-found sense of faith independence as students begin to unlearn the faith held by their parents and engage in an exploration of faith identity, seeking their own understanding about faith (Parks, 2000). The transitions experienced by college students test their resiliency and ability to adapt as they experience their world and process for themselves their own understandings of that world. Gen Z students are coming to campus with a greater need for mental health care and support from faculty and staff, most commonly in the areas of anxiety and depression (Lukianoff and Haidt, 2018; Bohannon, Clapsaddle, and McCollum, 2019; Gutierrez and Gutierrez, 2019; Doughty, 2018). The classroom experience can no longer

be isolated from the co-curricular as students struggle to cope with the complexities of their world while embarking on the traditional college development journey into adulthood.

College Student Stress

Common language used by students to describe the college experience is that it is stressful. A student may positively or negatively experience stress throughout their educational journey at college as they navigate their engagement of academic, social, physical, mental, and spiritual development. The fluctuation of their stress directly impacts their mental health. Acknowledging the mental health experiences of Gen Z, specifically in the educational context, Gross (2020) introduces the term Generation T (trauma). Generation Z falls into this category, representing students enrolled in any form of education from 2001 to present, due to the significant change to life experiences as a result of the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 (Gross, 2020). Speaking to student affairs professionals, Burke et al. (2017) provides a helpful equation to frame the student experience of distress, which is described as a specific, negative experience of stress understood to be a low-level mental health stressor for students.

Burke (2017) describes distress using the equation $D = (E+V) / (PR+SS)$, in which “distress equals the sum of exposure and vulnerability divided by the sum of psychological resources and social support” (p.130). Breaking down the equation, the creator explains that “E” (exposure) represents the real or perceived stressors a student is experiencing. The “V” (vulnerabilities) are the inherited aspects of life that a student carries, such as the values taught as a child, or genetics. The skills a student has learned are categorized by “P” (psychological resources) in the equation. A student’s relationships and community are represented by “SS” (social support). The function of this equation helps to communicate what influences a student’s

experience of distress. To understand the value of the equation to those supporting students, the authors go on to explain that, “as the numerator (exposure plus vulnerabilities) increases, the level of distress increases. As the denominator (psychological resources and social support) increases, the level of distress decreases” (Burke, et al. 2017, p.131). Christian higher education has the opportunity to increase the denominator by improving the psychological resources and social support offered to a student’s experience. A closer look at the mental health landscape of college students portrays a need to pursue further understanding of their experience, including their experiences of trauma. Differentiating between the experiences of *stress* and *trauma*, McBride (2021) writes,

“stress is an activation of the mind-body system in response to experience of a stressor – illness, traffic, death, important events, big life changes, natural disaster, or even the anticipation of those things – together with the perception of threat posed by that stressor...a stressful event becomes a trauma when we feel overwhelmed and powerless...trauma is defined by how a person experiences an event, not by the event itself” (p.58-59).

Additionally, Menakem (2017) states that trauma can be a response to *anything* the body experiences as “too much, too soon, or too fast” (p.14). Both explanations demonstrate the complexity of trauma for a student’s lived experience.

Trauma and Student Learning

For the purposes of this study, understanding how the impact of trauma affects a student’s learning provides guidance for how pedagogy is engaged, or not engaged, by the student. In cases where a student’s sense of safety has been threatened, their nervous system may

respond in three different ways. Commonly known as “fight, flight, or freeze,” a person may respond by engaging the threat (fight), avoiding the threat altogether (flight), or respond by dissociating (freeze) (van der Kolk, 2018). Recognizing that relationships are also greatly impacted by the presence of trauma combined with the student’s response helps faculty to recognize what is taking place in a student’s mind. As Van der Kolk (2017) emphasizes the significance of one’s sense of safety in saying, “being able to feel safe with other people defines mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives” (p.354). The disruption to a sense of safety prompted by traumatic exposure highlights the reality of many college students’ experiences.

Acknowledging that college students can arrive to college with diverse experiences of traumatic exposure provides broader context for the complexity of the issue presented to faculty in being attentive to their students’ mental health. A study conducted in 2011 examined the rates of trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress disorder among incoming college students (Read, Ouimette, White, Colder, and Farrow, 2011). The study found that sixty-six percent of participants (n=1,999) reported experiencing a traumatic life event. The traumas experienced by the participating students were categorized into the following topics: natural disaster, warfare, sudden unexpected death, life-threatening illness, physical violence, unwanted sex, and other. Of the sixty-six percent indicating a traumatic exposure, experiences of life-threatening illness and sudden unexpected death presented as the top two categories. Summarizing their findings, the researchers state, “Although perhaps buffered from some of life’s harsher realities within the college environment, college students are not protected from trauma and resulting psychological sequelae” (Read, Ouimette, White, Colder, and Farrow, 2011, p.153). Since this study was

conducted in 2011, there have been additional studies exploring college student experiences of trauma.

Doughty (2018) highlights the need to equip faculty when stating, “there are minimal trauma-informed educational offerings [for faculty] addressing the impact of trauma and strategies to support these students” (p.11-12). With the increase in student trauma exposure, discussions about faculty involvement in student mental health training and care have entered the higher education field as faculty seek guidance (Bray, 2019; Flaherty, 2021).

While there are other settings where trauma is prevalent among young adults, education proves to have increasing rates of trauma-impacted learning as students have been more exposed to significant disruptions such as natural disasters, terror attacks, or school shootings within their lifetimes (Davidson, 2017; Doughty, 2018). Making an effort to understand the current generation of students, Lukianoff and Haidt (2018) explain six observed trends that should be considered by college administrators and faculty. One of those six trends is the rise of anxiety and depression in adolescents. Further explaining their observations, the authors write, “By 2017... colleges were not the primary cause of the wave of mental illness among their students; rather, the students seeking help were part of a much larger national wave of adolescent anxiety and depression unlike anything seen in modern times” (Lukianoff and Haidt, 2018, p.144-145). The increase in anxiety and depression produced a higher demand on campus counseling centers, creating what Xiao, et al. (2017) deemed a “crisis” of college student mental health due to the centers being unable to keep up with requests for sessions.

In a study researching the traumatic life events of college students, authors found that the lifetime exposure of trauma for students by the time they get to college is significant and can be

categorized into multiple traumatic events per student (Frazier, et al., 2009). Seeking to understand the repercussions of trauma, specifically on the way that identity development of students is impacted, Shalka (2019) conducted a qualitative project with undergraduate students about their experience. Participants were selected based on the qualifications of a) being a current undergraduate student and b) having had a traumatic experience they would be willing to explain both in writing and to the research interviewer. Shalka (2019) found that the social identities of the participants significantly impacted how participants “began the work of understanding their traumatic encounters” (p.749). Part of the social identities finding was the importance of social discourse for participants’ trauma processing. Shalka (2019) explains that social discourse represents the external messages that participants felt kept them silent in their trauma processing, specifically sharing that “a closely related discourse that emerged for many participants was one of what counts as trauma or not and how their own experiences could be validated” (p.749). Capturing well the findings of their research, Shalka (2019) shares a metaphor given by one of her participants, who writes:

Have you ever seen a tree that was hit by a hurricane when it was a sapling? That tree bends, and it rights itself and grows back straight, but there’s a little nick and a bump in the tree. You look at it, and you’re like, ‘Oh, it underwent something really nasty, but it kept going.’ I feel like that’s how I see myself...I am still the same person, I just have a little bump.” (Beth, as cited by Shalka, 2019, p.739).

The example of the bump in the tree provides an image for the powerful impact trauma can have in a person’s life. However, the participant’s narrative included an element of hope by naming their nature to pursue healing. Relating the trauma exposure of students back to their educational context, Gross (2020) explains her reasoning for identifying Generation T (trauma)

by stating, “If we have no way of referring to all the issues related to trauma and its symptoms across the educational pipeline, we cannot robustly share strategies that can be deployed across the pipeline for the benefit of students as well as educators” (p.161).

The mental health narrative of current college students tells a story of the student experience and the variety of developmental responsibilities they engage during their educational journey. Evident in the student’s story is the responsibility placed on faculty to deliver not only content, but relationship and care for their students (Freytag, 2015). As mental health concerns continue to rise, how are Christian campus faculty sustaining these responsibilities? In an article naming the increased exposure of faculty to student mental health experiences, the author writes, “Students’ college experiences are going to be shaped by their mental health and well-being, and faculty have a role to play in shaping that” (Lipson as cited in Flaherty, 2021). Before recommending methods for faculty to embark on this responsibility, there is value in first understanding faculty experiences of student mental health in the classroom.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This study used the qualitative research method to best meet the objectives of the research questions. The purpose of using qualitative methods to interview participants was to understand the “lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (Seid, 2013, p.9). Participants were interviewed about how college student mental health has influenced their pedagogy as faculty in Christian college classrooms. Since the study of faculty perspectives has not been greatly explore, the methods used within a grounded theory research structure were used.

For the purpose of this study, a grounded theory approach was applied to the qualitative process. The grounded theory model of qualitative research involves the researcher setting out to explore a phenomenon by using “an inductive approach where new theories are derived from the data” (Delvetool.com, 2022). This inductive approach is specific to process the researcher follows for analyzing the data obtained by interviewing participants. The particular method of grounded theory was chosen based on the theories founding principle where the researcher is “questioning their place in research texts” (Birks and Mills, 2012, p.7). As there was not a significant amount of existing research on the topic of faculty pedagogy in relation to student mental health, the researcher was seeking to find a place within the research to add a contribution in the absence of information.

Population

The participant population consisted of teaching faculty at four Christian college campuses. The specific demographic of Christian institutions was chosen because a theological

component was integrated in the foundation of this study. Christian institutions would provide a specific lens through which participants were responding as well as familiar with. All participants were currently teaching in a Christian college classroom and willing to share about their experiences relating to how college student mental health has influenced their pedagogy as faculty. To gather a collection of experiences, two to three participants from four different institutions were invited into the research process. Participation was voluntary and each participant was given a consent letter (Appendix A & B) to review before agreeing to be interviewed for the study. As participants were sharing experiences that may prompt a reminder of past traumatic experiences from their time as faculty in classroom settings, the researcher also provided a recommendation for participants to seek professional guidance in processing the past trauma, as indicated in the participant consent form, should it be needed. Throughout the research process, participants' anonymity was protected by using pseudonyms. The institutions of each participant were also given a pseudonym so as to further protect any identifying factors within participants' stories.

Procedures

In order to recruit the needed participants, the researcher identified four campuses, with a primary contact within each institution. The primary contact reached out to prospective interviewees with an initial inquiry email explaining the study and the requirements of participants. Interested participants were instructed to contact the researcher to receive more information about the study, including the participant consent form, instructions for coordinating a time to complete the interview, and notifications about using Zoom video conferencing platform for the actual interview. Participants were given the option to keep the video recording off if they preferred to only have the audio recorded.

To compare and understand the experiences of faculty members teaching in Christian college classrooms, the researcher followed a constructed interview script to conduct the 60-90 minute individual Zoom interviews (Appendix C). Interviews were recorded using the Zoom recording feature, which captures the audio and visual components of the interview. Participants were provided the option to have their video turned off for the entirety of the interview if they desired, allowing the researcher to record only the audio. After the interview concluded, the researcher used the audio transcription tool offered on Zoom to transcribe the interview. The researcher then reviewed the produced transcription and corrected any typographical errors and formatting. At this point, the data analysis process was implemented.

Data Analysis Plan

After all interviews were completed and an initial transcription document was obtained for each individual interview, the researcher began the data analysis process. Through an inductive analysis process of transcription, coding, theming, and an interrater review, the content of the interviews were analyzed to discover outcomes for the study. The use of an interrater was used to improve the reliability of the researcher's initial coding process as the interrater reviewed a sample of the researcher's first efforts at coding and provided feedback on the credibility of the information presented.

Specifically, an interrater reviewed the initial coding produced by the researcher for "negating any bias that any one individual might bring to outcomes" (Creswell, 2012, p.161). Additionally, having an interrater review the first attempts at the researcher's coding is beneficial as "that coding is the first place where the analysis begins to move beyond the raw data into a more abstract conceptual framework" (O'Connor and Joffe, 2020, p.2). Lastly, the qualitative analysis software, NVivo (March 2020) stored the transcribed interview materials and assisted

with coding records. The researcher bears responsibility for coding and theming within the NVivo software; however, the NVivo platform stores and tracks researcher notes in an organized manner, allowing for greater reliability within the coding and theming process. NVivo is also a secure database with password-protected storage to continue to protect participants' information and responses.

Assumptions

In pursuing the intended research, there were a few assumptions to address prior to conducting the participant interviews. The first assumption is that faculty members have experienced some impact of college student mental health on their teaching experience. Referring to the increasing college student mental health trends, what is evident is college student mental health continues to be a rising concern on many Christian college campuses (Davidson, 2017; Cox, Dean, and Kowalski, 2015; Bohannon, Clapsaddle & McCollum, 2019). This being so, it is assumed that faculty are more likely than not to have encountered, with at least one student, the effect of a student's mental health on the faculty member's teaching experience. The second assumption is that faculty participants will have experienced needing to adjust their pedagogy in the midst of the last several years of increased college student mental health crises on campuses. These two assumptions cannot be verified as true as a result of this study's outcomes. Helping to inform the intent of the study by naming a gap in the research, each of the assumptions named point to an opportunity to gather and understand the experiences of faculty as a contribution to the broader search within Christian higher education for a way forward in supporting students' mental health more sustainably.

Scope and Delimitations

Indicative of a broad statement such as the search within Christian higher education for a sustainable method for caring for student mental health, this study requires a specific scope in order to remain consistent with the research topic and provide a focused research process. In order to keep the study focused, the researcher placed a boundary within the possible avenues of the study. The intent of the study was to pursue faculty experiences specific to college student mental health as it manifests in the Christian college classroom and the impact of that intersection on faculty pedagogy. Therefore, the researcher cannot include deeper study specifically on the topic of COVID-19 on faculty pedagogy. As an anticipated theme that did arise in faculty responses, COVID-19 was a focal point of participants' responses, especially as the interviews were being conducted during the ongoing pandemic. The researcher will offer the data as presented, being true to the qualitative process, but will not spend extended research efforts on exploring COVID-19 experiences or implications as related to the study.

Limitations

In addition to naming the areas for which the researcher limited their scope of study in order to provide a deeper, more focused research response, there also needs to be an acknowledgement of the limitations present in the research design. Conducting qualitative interviews allows for a thorough understanding of faculty experiences, but presents a limitation as it only allows for the exploration of a small population of narratives compared to the possibilities of a quantitative research study, which could provide more of a breadth of responses from a larger participant pool. However, the narratives of the participants provide depth and insight to the intended research topic.

Ethical Considerations

To comply with ethical standards relating to research methods involving human participants, this study followed the above methodology. In addition, the researcher provided each participant with a consent form (Appendix B). The participant consent form acknowledged the participant's experience as valued and protected by the research methods. The consent form also explained what the participant could expect in relation to being recorded, the use of their recordings, and the proper storage of the data for continued protection of the participant's shared responses. Upon completion of the research process, recordings and transcriptions will be deleted. The researcher also pursued an institutional review in which the supporting committee provided thorough analysis of research methods, granting approval from the supporting institution, Evangelical Seminary, before recruiting participants for the intended study.

Analysis

The methodology described was used to complete the research process as intended. The researcher followed the inductive process for the benefit of "allowing the theory or narrative to emerge from the raw data" (Delvetool.com, 2022). After interviews were completed, the researcher uploaded each of the transcriptions to the NVivo (March 2020) software for analysis. With the use of NVivo (March 2020), the researcher was able to review each transcript in the program allowing for an efficient record of coding notes managed by the software. Using the open process, the researcher read through each transcript with an initial review, noting sections of significance within each interview. Next, the researcher shared a copy of two transcripts with an interrater who was chosen based on their research experience and who had also completed doctorate level research. The interrater reviewed the initial coding attempts of the researcher by following the guidance of the interrater practices summarized by O'Connor and Joffe (2020).

This step helped to affirm the direction of the coding, being sure to acknowledge any recognizable biases or blind spots in the researcher's initial review.

Next, the researcher began a second review of the interviews as the next step of the coding process which was to begin grouping codes into sub-codes, or sections of commonalities or patterns. During this step, the use of NVivo (March 2020) helped to organize the data as the researcher began breaking apart sections of interviews to be grouped under certain sub-codes, a task that could invite errors if not managed well due to the nature of moving participant's responses. NVivo kept the original files while allowing code scripts to be created within each transcript. The code scripts demonstrated the code density for each interview and provided a quick analysis summary when looking to see how many sub-codes were represented in each interview.

Lastly, after another review of the transcripts for any additional codes, the researcher began the final review using the theming analysis coding process (Creswell, 2012) of synthesizing existing sub-codes into a smaller grouping to establish themes. Having acknowledged the above analysis and methods, a review of the findings follows.

Chapter 4

Findings

This study sought to understand the experiences of faculty teaching at Christian colleges and universities as it relates to the impact of college student mental health on faculty pedagogy. An introduction to the participants and their institutions is provided followed by the main findings, or themes, from the research process.

For the purposes of this study, four Christian liberal arts institutions of higher education were selected. Institutions were selected based on institution type as well as contacts available to the researcher for assisting in disseminating participant invitations. Each institution was given a pseudonym to further protect participants' identities as promised in the research protocol. Pseudonyms were selected using colors which have no preconceived affiliations. The below table denotes the pseudonyms chosen as well as the published enrollment numbers for each institution for added context.

Institution Pseudonym	Number of Enrolled Students
Sepia College	800
Indigo University	2,200
Lavender University	2,000
Magenta University	1,400

Table 1: Institutional Size

Participant Overview

As previously mentioned, participants were selected based on a) their current status as an active professor and b) their willingness to share their experiences. What follows is an

introduction to each participant, including years spent at their current institution, teaching context, and other information they felt relevant to share about their role as a professor. The participant information is summarized in Table 2 for reference.

Participant	Institution	Department	Year range at current institution	Grad Level Courses
Kate	Sepia College	Religion Studies	20-25 years	●
Lucy	Sepia College	Education	15-20 years	●
Dan	Sepia College	Communication	30+ years	
John	Sepia College	Humanities	15-20 years	
Kim	Indigo University	Nursing	5-10 years	
Nicole	Indigo University	Nursing	5-10 years	
Molly	Lavender University	Communication	5-10 years	
Sam	Lavender University	Education	15-20 years	●
Anne	Magenta University	History	1-5 years	
Dexter	Magenta University	Social Science	5-10 years	●
Gwen	Magenta University	Sociology	5-10 years	
Helen	Magenta University	Social Science	20-25 years	●
Louise	Magenta University	Nursing	15-20 years	

Table 2: Participant Demographics

Kate

Kate was teaching at Sepia College in religion studies. At the time of the study, Kate was teaching in-person courses as well as online courses. Kate shared that a quarter of her teaching load fell into the general education category and the rest of her courses are upper-level within her department. Considering the number of students in her courses, Kate shares that her upper-level courses tend to average around twelve students while her general education courses can be upwards of forty students.

Lucy

Lucy was a faculty member at Sepia College teaching in the education department. Lucy was teaching in-person for residential undergraduate courses and online for masters' students in the graduate program. Most of her courses were considered upper-level at this point in her teaching load, focusing mostly on the junior and senior year experience with education majors.

Dan

Dan was in the communication department at Sepia College. Serving as a generalist within his department, Dan taught most of the required courses in his major as well as the capstone senior seminar for communication majors. Most of Dan's courses included students from first year through senior year due to the nature of teaching general education courses within the major.

John

John was at Sepia College in a humanities department. Within John's current course load, there were a few general education courses which consisted predominantly of first-years. He also had engaged a wide range of students in terms of year due to the general education and senior seminar requirements at his college. John served as the study abroad coordinator on his campus – a unique responsibility that he has enjoyed throughout his time at Sepia College.

Kim

Kim was in the department of nursing at Indigo University. As part of her role in the nursing education program, Kim was one of the professors who taught in the classroom as well as in the clinical practicum for nursing students. Kim mostly taught sophomores who are starting out in the nursing program and juniors and seniors who were entering their final stages of the nursing program, including clinical experiences. When asked if there was anything she would like the researcher to know about her current teaching context, Kim shared that she was currently in school herself and that had added a level of empathy in terms of how she taught her students.

Nicole

Nicole also taught in the nursing department at Indigo University. Nicole taught mostly at the senior level, preparing students as they began to transition out of college. She also taught junior level nursing students but did not teach any first-year or sophomore students. Describing her current teaching load, Nicole shared that she had twelve hours of clinical practice each week and four hours of in-class courses for her teaching load this year. Nicole was passionate about nursing research and has completed her own research around the topic of college student anxiety, which was what drew her to participate in this study.

Molly

Molly taught at Lavender University, but noted she had been in higher education for at least two decades prior to her time at Lavender University. Molly taught in the communications department and most of the course load fell in the general education category, allowing her the opportunity to teach all levels of students. In her context at Lavender University, Molly served as a generalist in the communication department. Her typical course load was teaching four, 3-

credit courses each semester. While she was teaching across the offerings of the communications department, her area of expertise was in the art of persuasion and rhetoric.

Sam

Sam taught at Lavender University in education. At the time of the study, his course load was minimal as he had taken on more administrative roles at the university. Sam was teaching at the graduate level with a few courses in his teaching load being dedicated to the first-year experience. Most of his courses focused on the topic of facilitating student learning or research methods for the educational context.

Anne

Anne taught history at Magenta University. Anne taught courses ranging from the 100 level to the 400 level at her institution, giving her a range of students. Her average course sizes ranged between a small upper-level class sizes of ten to twelve, to around 35 students in her 100 level courses. When asked if there was anything additional she wanted to share about her teaching context, Anne highlighted that she had been an international college student studying in the US, and was now teaching as an international faculty member at a US institution. One of her intentions in joining this study was to share a perspective of an international college student experience.

Dexter

Dexter was in teaching in social science at Magenta University. Dexter has taught both undergraduate and graduate level students within his department, though was teaching a mostly undergraduate course load at the time of his interview.

Gwen

Gwen was a professor at Magenta University working in sociology, where she has taught primarily at the undergraduate level. Gwen served as the only full-time sociology professor, so covered first-year through senior level courses and was able to journey with majors through their four years in the department. Prior to teaching at Magenta University, Gwen also taught at another Christian institution for nine years, for a total of eighteen years within a Christian higher education context.

Helen

Helen taught at Magenta University teaching in a social science program. Helen has previously taught at the undergraduate level but was teaching graduate level courses at the time of the study. Her average graduate class size is around twenty students, though some of her online graduate courses have seen enrollments of 50-70 students. Offering additional context to her teaching experience, Helen shared that she formerly taught sociology, journalism, and writing courses in the general education undergraduate level.

Louise

Louise was taught in the Nursing program at Magenta University. Within the undergraduate nursing program, Louise taught both in the classroom and in the clinical experience and therefore only teaches students in their final semester before graduation.

Themes

As a result of the previously detailed methodology, four main themes arose from the participant interviews in connection to the original research question exploring the impact of college student mental health on faculty pedagogy. The themes presented are:

1. The value of relationships for pedagogy;

2. Students' lowered engagement with pedagogy;
3. Mental health accommodations within pedagogy; and
4. Impact of faculty well-being on pedagogy.

Each theme holds within it a connection to the faculty's experience of pedagogy as impacted by students' mental health. Each of these themes will be explored with the support of the participant's responses.

The Value of Relationship for Pedagogy

Thirteen out of thirteen participants named the value of relationship with students for pedagogy in the professor role. When asked about their personal pedagogy, as opposed to a broader definition of the term, all participants included a relational element in their response. Sharing her personal pedagogy for nursing students, Louise shared that she viewed her pedagogy as asking, "How do I implement this [content] from a human perspective, one human to another human?" Also expressing the value of relationships within her pedagogy, Anne shared, "I think pedagogy has to do with not only the techniques specifically, like how to arrange your classrooms, but to really build relationships with each one of your students."

Naming the dialogical value within his courses as a communication professor, Dan described the significance of interpersonal relationship for learning. While being online, Dan felt the missed interactions and comparatively stated, "There's something about talking to a person and looking at their face and communicating that is different." Naming the unique nature of nursing clinical, Nicole described her aim to build relationships as she hosted her clinical students for a movie and taco night, sharing her intention to "try to make it feel like there's a community and that they can share and talk with me."

Describing the value of relationship for her pedagogy with education students, Lucy stated, “The way I understand my role is I get to know my students and I establish a relationship, I build rapport with them, and I use that to support my responsiveness.” Lucy described responsiveness as a value in her pedagogy by explaining that she wanted to position herself to adjust to where her learners are in any given class. Dexter shared in more detail about his understanding of relationships for his pedagogy as he elaborated, “When I think about teaching and knowledge and knowledge production, you know, it's all about relationships and so that's been really formational for me, to think about: What is a teacher? Who is teaching? Who is the classroom for?” The value of relationship for pedagogy is rooted in the faculty-student interaction within the described experiences of the participants. Next, a sub-theme of care for students as significant to faculty pedagogy arose.

Care for Students. Participants demonstrated their care for students through stories and descriptions of actions they had taken for individual students to support their learning. This may have taken the form of encouragement, like when Nicole provided her clinical nursing students with a coffee gift card to use when they “had a rough day at clinical.” Or, care for students may have shown up through extra steps a professor took to assist a student, such as when Dan took the time to call individual students during remote learning when students were having a hard time creating schedules and keeping up with materials.

Speaking specifically about the change to his pedagogy while teaching online, Dan described the scenario further as he stated, “I didn't want to add to their nightmare, but by saying ‘Oh, you have to be online for my 9:30 class,’ when I knew that everybody else in the family was going to have to be online and I didn't want to add to their stress.” Sharing personally about

expressing care for her students, especially when they're sharing about their experiences, Helen explained,

I don't find it a problem to tear up or cry in class and occasionally I will, because I think that's just showing students that I care about them. I forget who said this, but tears are like unexpressed love and so like I think about when I'm crying it is because I love these people, and I am sad that they were harmed.

John shared about a student who expressed extreme discomfort posting in an online forum for his course. In response, John allowed the student to send her posts directly to him so that she could focus on the content and not worry herself with the public forums. Kate described an increased opportunity she had given in the last few years to allow students to take exams verbally because they have disclosed test anxieties. When students have submitted papers or projects after midnight, Nicole has tried to check in with those students to acknowledge their sleep by sharing an email that would read, "Hey student, saw you were up at 2am, hope you got a good night's sleep." Teaching in a Christian higher education context, Kim shared about her integration of Scripture to the start of her classes as a means to support her students. She described,

I typically start my classroom with some sort of Bible verse or a prayer but I often try to pick a Bible verse that talks about how God is with us and we're not alone...because I personally find that really helpful. Also I'm hoping that the students will find it helpful because this is a challenging thing that they are doing and I want them to know...I'm trying to provide support for them.

Kim also described an interaction she had with a student prior to the research interview for this study in which the student who came to her office exhibited signs of high anxiety. Kim

encouraged the student to have a seat and simply listened to her for an hour and summarized the interaction by saying, “She just wanted to talk and wanted somebody to care. I mean I don't know that I made any remarkable impact on what she had already learned, but I think the fact that I was listening to her and caring might have made her feel a little bit better about things.” Sam communicated a similar level of caring by thinking intentionally about the learning environment he created by following the concept that, “The environment needs to create an invitation, where students feel like they belong, feel like they can share things.”

The above examples demonstrated the subtheme of care for students, which fittingly falls under the larger category of the value of relationships for pedagogy. This value often inspired faculty to shift or adapt their pedagogy for the benefit of students' learning because they developed relationships with their students so they knew when a student was not themselves. The sub-theme of changed pedagogy helps to further reflect this sentiment as evidenced from the shared experiences of the participants.

Changed Pedagogy. Reflecting on the ways in which they may have adapted or altered their personal pedagogies, Louise offers a reflective statement about how she had learned from her students by being in relationship with them. She shared:

I've gotten a lot more accepting of the fact that things happen. We're human beings, and you know, perfection isn't the goal here and so to learn to walk with students in their process, in their educational journey, is really kind of the thing that I've learned over time.

Also reflecting on what she had learned from students and how she had shifted in her pedagogy, Helen shared the example of coming alongside of her students:

I was doing much more of like walking with people outside the classroom if I needed to. Or, you know, saying 'hang on a second, let's talk about what I see happening' and that is something I didn't have the skill to do or that I might have been afraid to do much earlier like when I was a much younger teacher.

As a professor still in the early years of her career, Anne noted the difference she observed by reflecting on the question about her pedagogy. Anne shared about her experience early on, in her first year or two of teaching at Magenta University. She explained,

I didn't really have that much of these really intimate and personal conversations, except for a handful of students who were very outgoing and engaging stopping by my office. And then, once I started to get used to my role, like starting from I think the second semester or a year or two, and having built previous relationships in other courses, then I started to see students coming to me much more frequently.

Continuing in her reflection, Anne also shared her observation of how these increased relationships with students changed the way she “moved around the classroom.” Early on in her teaching, Anne noticed in hindsight, she would go to a student if they were quieter or more withdrawn when the class was working on an activity or in discussion. Now, she names the relationships with her students as inviting her to move around and check in throughout the classroom.

The above excerpts were examples of professors positively reflecting on the changes in their pedagogy based on relationship with their students. Conversely, there were also changes that some faculty were hesitant to embrace but chose to for the sake of their students' learning process. One such example of this comes from Kate, who shared a bit about her experience

adding PowerPoints, or visual aids, to her lectures in a general education course. Fond of using stories to help illustrate her content, Kate described her addition of PowerPoint to her pedagogy:

Oh my goodness, my stories are always chosen to illustrate the point that I'm talking about, but if they [students] were zoning out during lecture, which people do, and they zone back in, because telling stories engages people, they're there for the story, but they have no idea where it relates, because they weren't paying attention, so you know PowerPoint helps them know where I'm at. So that's one of my biggest changes.

As someone who has historically relied on group discussion in his courses, John shared his recent attempts to appease a trend he was noticing of his students being less willing to engage in small group or class discussions. Sharing about his integration of electronic participation in his courses, John said,

I mean I've tried a few things where it's more electronic so everybody can participate, they don't have to talk in class. Because I mean I used to just say write something down and then you could ask them to share what they wrote, but even asking them, unless you call their name, sometimes they will volunteer, but they are hesitant to respond, so at least if it's electronic you've got their input. So, probably more and more of that type of thing going forward.

Still in the process of figuring out potential changes to her pedagogy, Kim reflected on a recognizable need for change while also sharing the reasons she hesitated to commit to those changes. Based on feedback from her nursing students about the course being too challenging, Kim explains:

I've gone back and forth, I don't want to make it so easy that they're not prepared, but I have also thought that I need to modify some things, particularly because we're seeing

students now who are coming in less prepared So I haven't done any significant reduction of the rigor, but I've been considering it. Because it's this balancing act between making sure that they're prepared, but also not stressing them extremely beyond what's reasonable as well, so I think I am constantly working on that balancing act.

Inclusive Pedagogy. Another sub-theme of the value of relationships for pedagogy relates to a desire shared by some participants to create inclusive pedagogy and classroom spaces for the increased diversity of students attending. Of the thirteen participants, six specifically named diversity in the classroom as a pedagogical shift they are making to become more inclusive in their classes. Directly naming this theme, Gwen said, “The student body I work with has gotten much more diverse and so that sort of changed the way I approached teaching as I think about equity in the classroom.” Speaking to a specific example of engaging with education students on white power and privilege as it relates to equity in the education system, some of Lucy’s BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) students asked of her,

‘Where are the black voices in this? What are BIPOC teachers able to do for this topic?’ And I realized the gap in my practices like, ‘Oh, I thought I was doing all this great stuff, but, oh, you’re right.’ So I’ve just been really transparent with the students, like this is a critique that came out in your reflections and so I talked about these are the different ways you guys are transacting with this chapter. And so I summarized and shared and then I said to be able to respond and answer, here’s a new set of readings and a discussion guide that we’re going to engage in today.

Adding to the desire to offer an inclusive pedagogy, Dexter shared about his experience inviting conversations about differences in his courses. He stated, “I try to pay attention in

particular to racialized, gender differences, as well as faith, in class and I get to take that stuff head on and it's a wonderful discussion."

Expectations. The last sub-theme under the value of relationship for pedagogy is the role expectations play in a faculty member's pedagogy, specifically relating to students' expectations of the professor and vice versa. Illustrating this sub-theme well, Nicole explained the high priority she places on communicating her expectations to students as she stated,

Students will say, 'Professor Nicole has clearly communicated her expectations up front,' because students don't want to know halfway through the semester, they want to know up front, and that makes for better classroom management and, hopefully, a better relationship, because they know my expectations. Because that's the worst when you don't know someone's expectations, because they're scared of us right because we're grading them.

Also making the connection between expectation and relationship, Dexter highlighted the importance of "going back through relationships and being clear with everybody that I'm in relationship with you, hopefully creating spaces that feel invitational for folks to say or do whatever they feel like they need to say or do." Reflecting on her communication courses, Molly observed the need for expectations for her student's sake in saying, "There needs to be clear expectations up front and there needs to be clear direction about how to enter in a variety of spaces when learning." Overall, the role of clear expectations, or setting expectations "up front," served as a strategy shared by these participants as it relates to establishing relationships with their students.

While relationships were a significant value marker for faculty pedagogy, participants' experiences with students varied as it related to mental health, student engagement, and care of

students in their courses. Exploring the next theme, lowered student engagement with faculty pedagogy, will begin to shed light on these experiences of students as observed by their faculty.

Students' Lowered Engagement with Pedagogy

Challenges observed by faculty in their experiences of students in the classroom presented through a theme of lowered overall engagement during class. While some participants named engagement specifically, others referred to the notion of engagement by describing their observations of students' behavior in the classroom, whether through nonverbal or peer-to-peer interactions.

John described his frustration trying to discern what students need as he has continued to adjust his pedagogy to meet their preferences for his courses. After listing off a few questions about what it might be – “it” being the low engagement level of his students – he ended with asking, “How do you teach students who aren't there?” John is referring to the absence of students, both those who are not showing up to class as well as those who are in class but are not participating. Similarly, Kim shared of her experience noticing disengaged students in the midst of a lecture:

I will say it is really, really difficult to teach when there is someone who is obviously kind of disengaged. I'm trying to figure out, 'How do I make this more interesting?' 'What do I do to kind of get that person back on board?' Whether they're confused, whether they're just not even paying attention at all, it can be a little distracting.

Both Dan and Lucy mentioned the impact they have noticed of students being on their phones. Dan, a communication professor, exclaimed how bothered he feels when he walks into a classroom and everyone “has their face in their phone.” Dan described how he tried to address it with his students by saying, “Put down your phone and talk to the human being sitting next to

you please.” Combining an awareness of phones with the theme of lowered engagement, Lucy described how she has seen students shift in their ability to follow through with study schedules. She explained,

They just are not willing to read the directions and slow down, and again I think they're able to have a schedule and stick to it but they're not willing to actually follow through. I think there's a difference. So I resist the language of, 'They're just not able to do it;' they haven't learned how. Well, I think they can, they just are choosing to be entertained by scrolling through Instagram or whatever instead.

Beginning to phase into the next sub-theme of lowered student engagement, Kate presented her personal processing of the balance between helping and accommodating students while also holding them to certain expectations. Not alone in her observation, participants expressed challenges they have observed from students around the area of engagement in their classrooms.

Challenges of Lowered Engagement. In one of Kate's upper-level courses, she had each student lead a particular unit within the class. In working with a student who was seeking an accommodation on the project, Kate found herself feeling frustrated. She explained,

That's the difficult thing, right? You try stuff and it doesn't work. And sometimes I do get very frustrated. I try not to ever express it to students who have mental illness issues, but like my senior seminar students lead and working with the student is like, 'Make sure you come on the day you lead,' 'There are no extra days,' 'There's no way to make this up,' and the student replying, 'Oh yeah, yeah I'm working on it....working on it,' but then she didn't show up. I don't know what to do.

The lowered engagement behaviors and examples shared by participants provided insight into the dynamics faculty were mulling over as they crafted their pedagogy within their disciplines. Speaking into the challenges, Louise commented, “As a trend overall, I would say, particularly in discussion-based classes, I’ve seen a little less willingness for students to speak up about issue-related topics.” This observation is relevant to Louise’s teaching context in working with nursing students in a course on ethics in medicine, a course which she described as being all about “issue-related topics.”

Within the nursing program at Indigo University, Nicole shared that some of the faculty have started to encourage a pencil and paper policy for their classes to intentionally discourage use of computers in their classrooms. This change was spurred on by the noticed level of distraction computers were causing students in their courses. Explained in her own words, Nicole shared, “They’re just so used to being on social media...and a lot of times we’re competing with their attention so...we encourage pencil and paper.” As far as how the challenges of lower engagement impacted faculty pedagogy, Molly summarized it by sharing,

Those of us who teach struggle with being as happy with how our last class went. We get a little over-invested in whether it went really well or really poorly, but it seemed like there was so much more of the latter.

Molly continued to talk more specifically about this observation in relation to the impact of restrictions within the classroom environment surrounding the COVID-19 experience on her campus, which will be discussed in a later theme. The last sub-theme that served as a cue to faculty for their reported experiences of lowered student engagement within their courses was the role of a students’ nonverbal response in class.

Nonverbal Behaviors. While not all participants mentioned students' nonverbals as a cue for gauging student engagement in class, four of them named it specifically as a challenge they navigate. Dexter expressed the sentiment shared by Nicole, Kim, and Molly. As Dexter explained, "How somebody is showing up in terms of their body or their posture, yeah that nonverbal piece, obviously communicates a lot." Referring to his classroom environment, Dexter further described:

How is this space organized? Where are people sitting? So there's all those pieces to pay attention to as well. So to be able to kind of get to know students and that, you know, helps me then interpret those nonverbals too.

Helping to transition to the next theme of this study, Kim introduced the topic of anxiety, specifically relating to her observation of nonverbals in the classroom. Kim described her experience as follows:

I feel also like there's almost a, I don't know, like a presence that can come out of somebody who is really, really anxious. So sometimes their facial expressions, they have this look of worry or – I'm trying to think how to explain it – yeah like the wrinkles on the forehead, or like kind of maybe a clinched jaw, or just kind of this look like they're worried. If they're really stressed about something you could also have sort of a fidgety, I can't get comfortable, I need to move behavior.

The mention of anxiety in Kim's example leads to the next theme that was obtained from participants' responses. Having discussed in the literature review the rise of college student mental health concerns, the next theme begins to speak to how faculty pedagogy has been impacted by student mental health.

Mental Health Accommodations Within Pedagogy

With the increase of mental health accommodations as a response to the rising mental health needs of students, faculty referenced the impact these accommodations had on their pedagogy. Describing how students' anxiety and depression show up in her classroom, Gwen commented on indicators such as "how much a student contributes and shares," as well as a student having a "string of absences" as indicators to her that a student is struggling to manage their anxiety or depression. In terms of how Gwen, a sociology professor, adjusts her pedagogy to accommodate those experiences with students, she explained:

We're dealing with young adults and what I've had to learn is that developmentally, I mean this is a window in which schizophrenia or bipolar disorder will emerge, and so I've seen that happen with a couple students. And that's been very good to help me be aware and come to understand that we're dealing with a population that you know, they're facing a lot.

Gwen's approach to how she responded to those students with anxiety or depressive behaviors was through a model of understanding and applying that understanding to the student's context.

Sharing more specifically about the process of seeking accommodations, Anne, a newer professor at Magenta University, shared:

This is coming from my colleague, the requests or the accommodation needs having to be met, as that expectation has become higher, like it seems there is no longer, that [accommodations] are no longer something that you feel you need to ask for.

The implication Anne shared of students not requesting the accommodation formally meant she was not as prepared or informed on how to make adjustments or on how to be accommodating to students. Also naming a level of uncertainty around how to accommodate students exhibiting

mental health needs in the learning context, Kate shared about her experience of having service dogs in her classroom. Kate had just been describing how faculty often learn by doing and figuring it out as they go when it comes to adjusting pedagogy. The example of service dogs as a mental health accommodation came up, to which Kate shared:

Service animals in the class, I've had two, maybe three, in class at the same time. I love dogs and yet it is distracting. It literally impacts the learning of other people who are also paying money for this class and what do we do about that, you know? The dog that snores loudly and everybody's laughing, right.

When asked through the interview process if he had observed mental health behaviors of students in his classes, John shared the following description of his indicators over the last few years of how to know when a student may be struggling with their mental health. He explained:

I would say, mostly it is withdrawal. Not participating in class. Increased absenteeism. Not getting the work done. Not responding to emails. I mean it's hard for them, I know, to say to somebody, "I've got these mental health issues and I'm on medication," but yet every once in a while somebody does. But yeah, I would say it's withdrawal and reticence.

Sharing more about her experience with nursing students, Nicole described that their program is "seeing a ton of anxiety, it's pretty rampant. Depression. Panic attacks." Nicole's experience is unique among the participants as she taught a course specifically around mental health in the nursing program. In describing her course, Nicole shared how students tend to respond to the material as many of them are engaging the deeper topics of mental health for the first time. In her own words, Nicole said, "The ghosts are there. The ghosts come out because we're exploring areas that they [students] most likely have hidden for years." The impact this

had on Nicole's teaching is her needing discernment on when to slow her curriculum in order to tend to students' realizations of mental health experiences or to continue on, offering them other resources on campus instead of addressing it during valuable class time. Also speaking from the perspective of the nursing faculty, Kim shared what she observed of student mental health and the impact it has had on her time. Kim stated,

I would say the last few years, the anxiety has been skyrocketing and some of my time has been really spent managing that anxiety. You know, even just yesterday in class partway through class a student was contacted and told that she had to go into quarantine. And she was feeling very panicky and so some of my role is...just trying to reduce the anxiety.

Naming more specifically the trend he had observed in recent years as an education professor at both the undergraduate and graduate level, Sam provided a detailed account of the impact of student mental health accommodations on his teaching. Beginning with a preface, Sam shared:

What's changed for me is that I've developed a greater awareness of mental health and this applies to first year students and grad students. For the first time ever during the time that I've been in higher education, since the late 90s, it's the first time ever that a student came to me and said they needed a mental health day. And that's much more prevalent now, I mean even this semester our students are talking about needing mental health days. Some of that is the prevalence of the much greater awareness of mental health. But in the classroom, now I've had to be more attentive to just where students are with their mental health.

Specific to Sam's reflection on student mental health in relation to his pedagogy, he shared the time differential that the awareness of student mental health has created in his teaching rhythms. Sam provided a percentage breakdown of his time with students, sharing:

Eight to ten years ago, 70% of my one-on-one interactions with students dealt with study skills and now, it's completely opposite. Only about 20% of the time when I meet with students, is it related to becoming a better learner. Eighty percent of the time it's usually connected to something mental health-related that's having an impact on their academics.

After explaining in greater detail a story about a student who "went catatonic in a class," Lucy shared that she has learned "mental health requires actions, not just words." Specifically wondering about the longevity of a student's mental health journey, Lucy started to pose the following questions about the students she has observed in regards to their mental health:

What I haven't figured out is when students can finally say, 'Okay, I think I'm good.' I mean it's good to have a mental health care professional available, but do you need to continue to see someone in that capacity for you to feel like you're okay? Is there a way that we can start learning some self-talk strategies? Are there some meditation strategies that can help us reset? What are some strategies that can support us in our independent and self-determined lifelong mental health? Again, I'm not saying anything negative about counseling, but I think it went from being this emergency kind of service to now everything seems to be an emergency in a lot of our students' minds.

The examples shared of participants' experiences of mental health accommodations in their courses helps to identify the areas they, as faculty, find uncertainty, frustration, or confusion around knowing how to best take action in accommodating their students. Further adding to the

experience of mental health accommodation and its impact on her pedagogy, Molly shared how her institution is trying to address the need for greater student accommodations while still upholding expectations for attendance. Explaining the disconnect she feels between policy and practice, Molly detailed:

The formal processes for how we would deal with excused absences felt like they didn't apply if people were saying they were anxious or depressed. They may not even be able to get in [to the counseling center] for care, or they couldn't meet the criteria officially. So you sort of had to allow a number of things, because you knew there were extenuating circumstances and you didn't always want to ask either. It's a difficult thing to push students to follow this five step of bullets I've given you when they're already hurting.

Participants generally referred to a range of student observations as “mental health,” most frequently referring to anxiety or depression as what was witnessed in the classroom. Seven of the participants specifically used the term “trauma” in some of their responses, despite the term not being included in the interview script. This became a sub-theme to the mental health accommodations as these seven participants provided stories and descriptions of how “trauma” specifically has been observed with their students in their courses. Due to the nature of their experiences of student trauma being shared through storytelling, most participants had longer examples to be shared at length which produced the sub-theme of student trauma. One participant's story will be provided to capture the essence of the theme, along with a summary of the details from other participants' experiences.

Student Trauma. Teaching in a program that includes a trauma informed discipline, Helen named the fact that her graduate students tend to arrive at their first courses holding unresolved trauma due to the nature of the program and the type of life experience held by those the program tends to attract. Helen shared a story about the ways in which trauma not only impacts the student, but can impact their peers as well as herself as the faculty member of the course. Helen had just shared about a student's trauma exhibiting through her restlessness in class, describing it as "an almost eagerness to share [her trauma]." The student shared a specific traumatic memory that had arisen with the class. Helen shared:

And strangely in that same class, and I think because of her experience, it loosened up somebody else's experience and the other person was aware of their own experience, but had not really dealt with it well. And then, this person started sobbing in class. She was somebody who had been a child during the Bosnia-Serbian war and she was told the story of coming home from a dentist appointment with her mom when the city had gone into lockdown after they had already made the appointment. They're coming home and being fired at with an automatic weapon and just seeing the dust coming up from where bullets were hitting the bricks in the wall beside her and running in fear of their lives. That's what is coming out in my classrooms.

I had another class in which one of the people that was sitting in the class was in their home in East Berlin. They were a refugee from Azerbaijan and he had been in the military and his brother was still in the military and I don't know if you remember last fall, but there was a renewed fighting with Azerbaijani and Armenian folks engaging in direct violence and he was sitting in my class, with his brother being on the front lines. First of all, the class was online, he was then connecting from Berlin and so it's nighttime

where he was at. He had a child. He had a wife. He had poor internet connection. By sort of his sharing into the class for different conversations I found out this stuff and there's no way that I can, or that as a program we could even read any of his mental health needs but he's impacting the rest of us in the classroom. The kinds of stories he's sharing of his own trauma.

What do I need to do to make sure that all my students were okay? That becomes a problem for me to solve so that gives me little space and time in the classroom. Then I've needed to deal with it, and I would say I didn't deal with it well in the beginning, and so I learned the hard way.... Lots of people are from situations that are chronic, where they're in a situation that is traumatic over a long period of time. And so, like being a teacher of trauma studies is sort of chronic.

The stories of Helen's students represent diverse and significant experiences of trauma, which were shared in the context of her trauma studies graduate courses, an advanced level of study. However, faculty teaching in undergraduate courses also shared about the stories or experiences they have observed in their own contexts. Summarizing the experiences of other participants, Kim, Nicole, and Gwen each mentioned the reality that there is more language provided for trauma processing than in past generations of students, which they attributed to their students being more willing to use the term "trauma" as well as their students' observed level of comfort sharing about such personal experiences.

Expressed by Gwen and shared in sentiment by Kim and Nicole, Gwen explained, "Students dealing with suicidal ideation is not new. Students dealing with panic attacks is not new. Students dealing with drug addiction is not new. There is a greater awareness and language to name those traumas." Speaking to the direct impact on how he addressed his classes, Dexter

shared about his learning around trauma awareness, particularly around the vocabulary he chose to use with his courses. Dexter stated, “I really am valuing structure and clarity and thinking ahead. Like the word ‘trigger’ is really interesting because I find I don’t use that language in the classroom, I’ll talk about content forecasting.”

Faculty participants demonstrated within the above theme that mental health accommodations were impacting their pedagogy. An analysis of these implications will be provided in Chapter 5. As a sub-theme, faculty shared about their specific institution’s resources for faculty as they relate to supporting student mental health needs in the classroom, as well as the limitations of current counseling center models on their campuses.

Counseling Center Limitations. Setting the stage for this subtheme, Louise shared about her experience responding to students in crisis, meaning those having “breakdowns,” or “panic attacks” in her courses. Louise shared that:

From a faculty perspective, I know we have a counseling center. I know students have access to a number of free counseling sessions, but the availability is pretty limited. They [counseling center] see a lot of people, there’s a lot of need, and so, when you have a student that’s in crisis, what do you do? Where do you turn as a faculty member? is sometimes a hard question.

Louise also broadened her response to address the limitations of resources in this area to the institutional level as she explained:

I think as an institutional kind of overarching thing, just recognition of the significance and the impact of some of these issues that students are facing and the increase in the frequency and the amount would be important. Because it takes resources, so from an

institutional perspective, you know, looking at what resources could help this would be an important thing.

Speaking also about the institutional response to student mental health support, Gwen shared that her institution has taken some steps to provide faculty with resources through a training to help faculty “understand the mental health needs of students.” Gwen also shared that the university created a trauma-informed statement for all faculty to include in their syllabi for the year, inviting students to utilize campus resources such as the counseling center. When asked what resources existed for John at his institution, he replied:

I try to say things to students, you know, ‘do you need help?’, but I mean we don't have adequate support, because we should have somebody that if I say, ‘I’ve emailed a student and made different comments to them and they’re not catching up,’ then who else can try? I think it’s going to have to start with the counseling center, I mean knowing that if we refer somebody they’re going to get helped.

Echoing a similar sentiment, Nicole described the resource situation at Indigo University as follows:

We do have a great center for mental health. Now, they’re overwhelmed and they’re understaffed and so you know I’ve also connected students with outside Christian counselors... I don't know that we have the funding to increase by five counselors, but they are trying to meet the needs of the students because they see the numbers going to the [counseling] center. They just kind of rise, every year.

Serving at the same institution, Kim shared about the counseling center as well, specifically about the impact the limited availability has had on her as a teacher:

I think we probably need even more [counselors] because there aren't enough appointments, which is challenging as a professor, because I want somebody to refer the students to for help. But I also know that they're completely busy so sometimes I'm spending time, I'm not trained in counseling, but I can listen...but I also feel a little bit ill equipped sometimes for the amount of mental health concerns because I definitely think it's increased.

Sharing from a different experience, Molly and Sam from Lavender University named several resources available to them as faculty and did not mention concern for counselor availability as other participants had. Additionally, Dexter suggested that Magenta University had “gotten a lot better about equipping faculty and staff to recognize student mental health needs.” Dexter specifically mentioned a tele-counseling service that was provided by the institution for students, staff, and faculty to help with processing mental health needs.

The above themes have represented a trend of student-oriented implications on faculty pedagogy as the faculty-student relationship, lowered student engagement, and mental health of students has been discussed. The last theme represents the experiences of faculty as it relates to their own well-being and the implications of their well-being on their pedagogy. Supported as sub-themes within the theme of faculty well-being are the experiences of exhaustion, boundaries, pandemic teaching, and value of colleague support.

Impact of Faculty Well-Being on Pedagogy

Based on the responses of participants in this study, faculty seemed to have reached a point in which they are finding their roles more challenging. Many, but not all, attributed this to their experience of teaching through a pandemic. In order to provide context to their experiences, a brief description of the COVID-19 pandemic is provided.

On March 11, 2020, a virus called COVID-19, or coronavirus, was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (cdc.gov). Over the course of the next two years, 2020-2022, the pandemic held significant implications for education environments as campuses sent students home and made a switch to online education, requiring residential professors to create a virtual pedagogy with little to no preparation. The events of the pandemic then heightened on April 3, 2020, when the CDC introduced a mask-wearing mandate to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, a mandate that was carried over into the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic years for many campuses.

The overall theme of faculty well-being stemmed from the participants' own reflections about their personal response to the impact of student mental health. Having just described the faculty culture at his institution, Dan shared that as a result of a few significant factors, faculty morale was lower than past years. Dan specifically states, "I think what has led to the low morale is because we have these incredibly high expectations for ourselves and for our colleagues and it feels harder and harder to meet those expectations." Naming her frustration with her early transition into the higher education teaching context, Gwen shared,

I was not just a professor. I had been put in this place, this position where I needed to be a counselor and a social worker and a parent and a theologian or a pastor and all kinds of things, and I mean that was huge. That was a huge thing for me and it came with frustration that I was in this place without support and that there didn't seem to be acknowledgement about this.

Following up to this reflection, Gwen also shared that within her institution faculty are expected to teach four courses each semester. For Gwen, that course load does not work well for

her as she explained, “I don't find that I can teach well when I teach four courses. I had seen that my teaching suffers and I'm not able to learn names as well and I don't have the time to meet student needs as well.” Also teaching at Magenta University like Gwen, Helen shared about her institution's course load model for faculty of four classes each semester. As a professor in her twenty-first year, Helen reflected back to her earlier years in comparison to her current teaching load and acknowledged:

As a younger faculty member, like there was never enough time to do anything, especially self-care. As an administrator in a big program, where I had just three total hours, so one course release to be the administrator all year, there was never enough time, ever.

Both Gwen and Helen mentioned that they have “learned ways to avoid” teaching four classes. Between the two of them, suggestions of teaching summer courses or taking a pay cut to teach fewer courses were practices they had done. Gwen specifically shared, “I've noticed that faculty, because it's not sustainable, they will find shortcuts in order to make it through and I, unfortunately, I think students get the short end of the stick ultimately.”

Adding to the sentiment of course load, Anne shared the conflict of time she can feel when faculty development workshops are offered, including those relating to supporting student mental health. Anne described her predicament as she said, “Any additional workshops require additional time commitment, which could be additional work time. No matter how helpful that resource may be, that means I have to kind of set aside time that I could be using for grading, for example.”

Switching gears from faculty course load to faculty availability for students, Kate described her observation that the busiest time of the semester for students, when they are most stressed and in need of academic support, is the same time that “faculty are most overwhelmed.”

These examples from participant responses begin to highlight how faculty are doing as they navigate teaching in Christian higher education. The pandemic served as another sub-theme for the study, as some participants focused more on the implications of the pandemic to their pedagogy than others.

Pandemic Implications. Representing an overarching theme as it related to pandemic implications, Nicole simply stated, “I think the classroom is really difficult right now to manage. Covid has just made it progressively worse for everyone to feel connected.” Describing what the early pandemic experience was like for her nursing students, Kim shared:

I would say that since Covid has happened... it has increased the students' anxiety I think even more. With the remote transition in spring of 2020, it was almost as though, that was halfway through our spring semester, and it was almost as though they forgot everything that happened before, and I think that's part of the trauma and so then moving into this year we found that students had not retained anything.

Identifying what several participants expressed in terms of the balancing act of their pandemic teaching, Molly described her transition to online teaching as follows:

It felt like we almost had to raise the energy, sometimes I think of it as the dog and pony show that you have to have something that was really funny or just enjoyable and the burden of keeping things going. At first we were just all in it, you know when we thought it was going to be two weeks or four weeks like whatever ...so we were doing everything from office hours on Zoom, to Slack, we use Slack a lot as an extra resource that felt a little bit more like texting. I could get a hold of my prof anytime because we just really need to make things work but at some point, all of these things felt like plates that were

spinning and it was difficult to maintain them all well. I think we're still living in a bit of the residue of that.

Part of the transition for faculty participants was the adjustment to teaching online, specifically falling into a pandemic rhythm nationwide of using the Zoom conferencing platform for class. Dan, reflecting on this transition, stated, “In the spring of 2020 when we all took off from campus, I had never taught online before, and so it was a complete pivot and retooling, sort of overnight. And it was overwhelming.” Wanting to acknowledge the lived experience of his students as well as his own experience, Dexter commented:

I think the last couple years of the pandemic in particular it's sort of going into sharp relief from this integrative piece, as opposed to disintegrated piece, that like what we're all experiencing right now is not something we have to check at the door when we come into the classroom. I think that's an important principle. I think that's always been an important principle for me, but it just seemed so much more obvious, in a way, the last couple of years, because how do you bracket a pandemic in the learning process? I mean, that's ridiculous.

Dexter's comment represents a shared sentiment between participants that the pandemic created level of uncertainty or operating without clear parameters that led to increased levels of exhaustion. Not always directly related to the pandemic teaching experience, the sub-theme of exhaustion presented within the faculty well-being theme.

Faculty Exhaustion. Directly naming her experience of exhaustion, Lucy expressed, “Higher education administrators keep telling us, ‘Take care of yourself, take care of yourself, take care of yourself’ and then they’re also saying, ‘And do this, and do this, and do this’ and it’s exhausting.” When asked to expand on her source of exhaustion as named in the previous statement, Lucy shared:

We in Christian higher education often just have this notion of, “Well, you’re serving God,” but we’re not on a missionary field, and this is a business. I am worried about the sustainability of our faculty here, and I am seeing a lot of exhausted bodies right now. So what I have tried to do is encourage and keep people accountable to create boundaries, because no one else is going to do it for them and to say “no more” ...because we can’t do it all, we just can’t. Then, because they’ve reduced staff, our jobs become bigger ... You know you only can keep things running with some gas.

Repeating the theme of exhaustion, or tiredness, both Dexter and Molly commented in their own ways a similar reflection as Lucy. Dexter stated, “I think students, I think all of us, just feel really tired these days. So that’s something that I think we name more.” Giving a broader overview of what may be contributing to this shared sentiment of exhaustion, John provided a detailed response:

When you see more and more students struggle that makes it harder. So it’s like, how long can I do this? I mean I’m close enough to retirement, I can start thinking down and so it’s like, can I make it that long? Because it just gets fatiguing...and we get out of this [pandemic] it will hopefully get better, but hopefully it doesn’t keep getting worse. That’s probably why I say we’ve got to have more support because you just feel burnt out. Like, am I doing enough? Hopefully it’s enough.

As these participants shared about their exhaustion or tiredness, a second sub-theme arose of boundaries. Even those participants who did not mention fatigue in their roles, spoke to the theme of boundaries needed in their role of faculty.

Boundaries. Strategies shared by Nicole, Kim, and Louise related to scheduling the times they check their emails and then being clear with their students on when they can expect responses. Kate shared that she “wished there were better boundaries frankly.” Sam shared about his boundary to only take on so much administrative responsibility so that his time would remain predominantly in the classroom. Detailing her recognized need for boundaries in her role, Molly shared:

I feel like we've gone a bit more toward a customer service model that anytime somebody wants something, we're going to find a way to give it to them. And at times that's great, the idea of that, the heart of that is beautiful. But if we've gotten to the point that we're doing all of the work and we're not holding people accountable and setting good boundaries, then we have maybe not well prepared someone for what they need to do next for their job and life. I had a health challenge that made me have to pull away for a little bit. And so I was still navigating some of these hybrid circumstances and needing to be more attentive to my own health, which kind of reminded me that life does have to have a balance.

Speaking specifically to the implications of supporting her students' mental health needs, Kim shared the personal challenge she felt when balancing her role:

I care very deeply for my students. But I have struggled with being able to balance my own mental health concerns and making sure that I am getting enough sleep and caring for myself so that I can give to them. I think that has been a really big challenge, because

the universities are struggling with retention....so when you're trying to balance that retention and you're trying to give to the students and help support them as they're increasingly more anxious, that puts a lot of weight on the faculty and it can be really difficult to handle that at times.

Based on her experience with her students, Nicole emphasized how she learned the need for boundaries in her role as professor. Nicole said of her students, "Sometimes they think you are their therapist. I remind them that I'm not. It just wears you down because you're feeling what they're feeling and some of them have very heavy things that they're carrying from their past." Stating specifically what she learned from her student interactions, Nicole explained, "I can't carry all the burdens, but I can help guide them to get the help and the resources and be a support, but I cannot own their troubles, because we all have our own struggles."

These participants named either the need for, or the practice of, boundaries in their role as faculty, connecting to the overarching theme of faculty well-being and its implications for their pedagogy. The challenges presented by the narratives of exhaustion and need for boundaries will be further discussed in the next chapter. A final sub-theme of the study was the value and significance the support of colleagues played in their role as professor.

Colleague Support. Framing the subtheme of colleague support, many participants celebrated their colleagues as the greatest support resource they have. Nicole shared about her nursing colleagues, "We all kind of support each other and I can't ask for a better team than people who support you."

Molly mentioned the benefit her colleagues are for her boundaries, stating, "It really helps to have colleagues to talk with about these things, and I think, as we discuss the scope of our involvement, or how much time a student is taking, it's a beautiful mirror to help hold us

accountable.” Anne referred to her best resource as being the “close collegial support” of her department. Acknowledging her own lack of self-care in her earlier teaching years, Helen explained, “I’m in a good place now, and part of it is that I have colleagues. This stuff happens and we do it for each other, we listen to each other.” Louise specifically named the benefit the support of her colleagues had on her on “a personal level, but also in a more formal, academic level.” Celebrating his colleagues at large, Dan stated, “I am in awe of our faculty. We have amazing faculty here.”

The support of their colleagues presented as a sub-theme under the impact of faculty well-being. The above participants demonstrated in their brief comments the affinity they have for their faculty colleagues. The themes of the value of relationship for pedagogy, lowered student engagement with pedagogy, mental health accommodations within pedagogy, and impact of faculty well-being on pedagogy offer implications and opportunities for faculty teaching in Christian higher education.

“The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God” (Bonhoeffer, 1954, p.20)

Chapter 5

The research aims of this study set out to explore the impact of college student mental health concerns on faculty pedagogy through a grounded theory qualitative research process. This chapter provides a discussion of the findings for this study as well as recommendations for practical application of the research findings.

The value of relationships for faculty pedagogy served as the first theme. The relational threads within this theme were demonstrated through the expressions of care faculty exhibited for their students, the inclusive efforts they pursued within their classrooms, the pedagogical shifts they made to better accommodate their students, and the expectations they have communicated to their students to help them succeed. The second theme was the noticeable trend of lowered student engagement with faculty pedagogy. Within this overarching theme, nonverbal communication from students arose as an indicator of low engagement for faculty.

The third theme represented experiences of increased mental health accommodations as affecting faculty pedagogy. As this study set out to specifically engage the topic of college student mental health concerns, this particular theme stands out as a correlation to the research question. Within this theme, participants shared their experiences of supporting student learning in the midst of receiving more requests for mental health accommodations from students. The final theme was the role of faculty well-being for influencing faculty pedagogy. This theme highlighted the personal experiences of faculty, specifically naming trends of exhaustion, valuing

of boundaries within their roles, and an expression of appreciation for the support received by their colleagues.

The Value of Relationship for Faculty Pedagogy

The value of relationship for faculty pedagogy holds a correlation to the relational, whole-person education model which encourages faculty members to engage their students holistically, not just academically (Palmer, 1993; Smith 2009). Returning to the concept of the reciprocating self (Balswick, King, and Reimer, 2016; Shults and Sandage, 2006; Harrison, 2010), the relationship between faculty and student serves as a priority for faculty. As evidenced by participants' examples, faculty at Christian institutions seem to hold a dedicated place within their pedagogy for getting to know their students so that they can best help them learn while getting to know them as people. This is captured by Louise, a nursing professor, who shared:

I would say the biggest thing that's kept me in the role is the relationships that I've been able to build with students that extend beyond their graduation... it's those things, seeing them function, seeing them build their career, seeing them happy and rewarded in the work that they're doing is really what keeps me motivated, it's those relationships.

A pedagogical value within Christian higher education is the honoring of the other in the learning relationship between faculty and student. Viewing one another through the lens of the *imago Dei* helps to reaffirm this relational value, especially as faculty model this practice, providing “education experiences that honor students’ status as ‘in God’s image’...which go a long way toward giving students a healthy sense of self-worth independent of particular abilities” (Dockery and Morgan, 2018, p. 109). Distinct to Christian higher education, the inclusion for valuing the *imago Dei* in the reciprocating relationship between faculty and students promotes

deep learning (Smith and Colby, 2010), particularly as the *imago Dei* is inclusive of the faculty as well, opening the perspective of the student to relate to their faculty. This reciprocal lens of naming self and other as made in the image of God emphasizes the mutual valuing of the other and encourages student and faculty to humanize one another, allowing a “pedagogy of vulnerability” to form (Brantmeier, 2010).

As indicated in the review of the literature on Generation Z, the age range typically representative of college students, 18-23 years old, has also been labeled as emerging adulthood (Balswick, King, Reimer, 2016). This is useful for applying the implications of the value of relationship for faculty pedagogy. Characteristic of the emerging adult period, students are exploring their faith identities, creating a sense of vulnerability in their spiritual lives (Parks, 2000). Additionally, Burke (2017) shares the helpful equation $D = (E+V) / (PR+SS)$, in which “distress equals the sum of exposure and *vulnerability* divided by the sum of psychological resources and social support” (p.130). As this equation is intended to represent an indicator of student distress, vulnerability represent students’ inherent aspects of life they carry with them.

A pedagogy of vulnerability is “an approach to education that invites vulnerability and deepened learning through a process of self and mutual disclosure on the part of co-learners in the classroom” (Brantmeier, 2010, p.3). This concept begins to diverge from the traditional literature on pedagogy by proposing that teachers, or faculty, share about their life experiences with their students for the purposes of creating a “lived curriculum” within the classroom, making the co-learning relationship more personal. Within higher education, the literature on student and faculty relationships affirms the concept of vulnerability with the data supporting interactions with faculty outside of the classroom environment as being positively perceived and welcomed by students in addition to within the classroom (Cotton and Wilson, 2006).

In light of the pandemic, the value of those relationships seemed to be particularly celebrated by participants who had all experienced the sudden shift to remote learning in 2020. Being able to return to campus and teach in-person with their students seemed to provide a reminder of the value they held for their students after having time apart. Affirming this sentiment, Dan, a communication professor, shared his reflection of missing student interactions during his campus's remote learning during the pandemic. Dan stated, "There's something about talking to a person and looking at their face and communicating that's different in person." Dan went on to share about missing the opportunity to sit with a particular group of student-athletes during lunch and the stories they would share about their lives between the casual sports talk. The findings of this study affirmed that the value of relationships for pedagogy of faculty in Christian higher education serves as foundational to the way faculty engage students. Valuing relationships helps them to navigate the challenges presented within other themes, such as the theme of lowered student engagement with pedagogy.

Lowered Student Engagement with Pedagogy

The relationships professors developed with their students indicated a level of responsiveness when it came to their pedagogy. As faculty shared about students they had taught over a longer course of time, they were able to provide more detailed and specific narratives about their support and care of those students. Within the literature, the role of a faculty member has been associated with the label "mentor" for students (Dockery and Morgan, 2018; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt, 2005; Parks, 2011). A collective reflection on the findings of this study demonstrates the sense of responsibility that faculty display for their students' well-being, which aligns with developing research related to faculty's experience of students' mental health as directly related to the pandemic (McMurtie, 2022; The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021).

This sense of responsibility is demonstrated in faculty's felt need to provide care for their students as best illustrated through the theme of lowered student engagement with faculty pedagogy.

The theme of lowered student engagement accentuated the valuing of relationship as the lack of engagement in class caused high levels of concern for faculty. Referring back to the idea of a theological anthropology as it relates to pedagogy in Christian higher education, Buber's (1970) explanation of "meeting" and "mismeeting" within human interactions proves a beneficial comparison for this theme. According to Buber (1970), a meeting of the other is authentic, or genuine, when there is a deep, dialogical relationship. Helping to summarize the concept of a "mismeeting," Trang (1996) explains, "A mismeeting occurs when two people fail to establish an interpersonal connection.... Genuine appreciation for the views, problems, or obligations of the other is missing" (p.13). When considering the reciprocating self, an experience of mismeeting another diminishes the reciprocating, as one person is no longer receiving or one person no longer giving in the mutual relationship.

As related to the theme of this study, lowered student engagement seemed to affect faculty through an experience of mismeeting. As faculty expressed the ways in which they experienced the lowered engagement of their students, there was a sense of discouragement, and some even changed their tone, noting a sense of uncertainty about how to address the trends they were sharing. Expressing the tone of this theme, Molly, having just shared about the return of her students to campus after their pandemic remote learning semester, stated, "I think we're still living in a bit of the residue of that [the pandemic]." The residue in Molly's comment refers to the dynamics of still living in a pandemic and the implications for campuses as they continue to navigate masking requirements, students going into quarantine, and the impact both of these

practices have for their pedagogy in this season. In sharing, Molly was first excited about students' return, but the "residue" soon made her realize that students were not engaged at the same level as they had been pre-pandemic, causing a sense of discouragement for her. Molly's discouragement models the felt experience of a mismeeting in the reciprocated relationship as Molly was giving but the students were not present to the relationship to receive, causing a break in the reciprocating nature of the relationship in this instance. This theme is significant for faculty as well as institutions at large as students continue their educational journeys in current and post-pandemic times.

A recent study conducted by McMurtie (2022) that polled faculty about post-pandemic engagement demonstrated a consistent experience between her participants and the theme of lowered engagement from this study. McMurtie attributes the reasons for the declining engagement to pandemic implications as she shares, "In addition to two years of shifting online, hybrid, and in-person classes, many students have suffered deaths in their families, financial insecurity, or other pandemic-related trauma" (para 3). In response to the stress caused to the body by such events, McMurtie references the allostatic load. The allostatic load as refers to a time when "environmental challenges exceed the individual ability to cope as a transition to an extreme state where stress response systems are repeatedly activated and buffering factors are not adequate" (Guidi, Lucente, Sonino, and Fava, 2021).

Understanding the allostatic load connects back to the literature shared on the functions of the brain and body in relation to trauma (Badenoch, 2008; Van der Kolk, 2014, Siegel, 1999). As students exhibited lowered engagement in class, faculty's mindfulness of the brain and body response may help them adapt pedagogy to better engage students in their learning. Yet, the experiences of student mental health concerns are more than a faculty member can carry –

acknowledging the methods used by faculty in an attempt to offer care for their students segues to the third theme of increased mental health accommodations.

Increased Mental Health Accommodations within Pedagogy

The rise of college student mental health concerns existed prior to the start of the pandemic (Davidson, 2017; Cox, Dean, and Kowalski, 2015; Bohannon, Clapsaddle & McCollum, 2019), and the pandemic experience seems to have accelerated the trend (McMurtie, 2022). Within this study, faculty indicated that student mental health most impacted their pedagogy through increased requests and needs for accommodations in the classroom and with assignments. This theme was evidenced by participants sharing their observations about student behavior around peer-to-peer dialogue and engagement, such as group work and presentations, to the impact of service animals on the learning of others in a classroom setting. Representing this theme in his personal account of observing student mental health trends, Dan shared:

I have noticed, I'm trying to think of the term, fragility, maybe? I have noticed more of our students struggling with depression and mental health. I've had more students share with me some of the challenges that they're having, but then, like last semester, I had to give a couple of incompletes to some students who basically just were struggling enough that they couldn't get their work finished. And I don't know yet whether there's actually more of it [mental health needs] than there was in the past, or whether it's become less of a stigma to talk about how I'm struggling.

Relevant to the theme of increased mental health accommodations within Dan's statement is the awareness that mental health "is less of a stigma." This may mean that students feel more open talking about their mental health experiences, as evidenced by the participants

who shared about students more directly sharing or requesting what they need in class. Participants demonstrated a connection with Herman's (1997) trauma healing framework, specifically the act of remembrance, as they connected with the sentiment that students seem more likely to share about their personal lives, specifically their mental health, through the sharing of their stories with faculty. Perhaps the noticeable openness of students is attributed to the benefit of narrative for trauma healing (Herman, 1997; Allender and Loerzel, 2021). The act of students sharing about their mental health or trauma to a faculty member may be both an affirmation of the trust established between co-learners as well as an attempt to seek healing by telling their stories. Faculty, in turn, may provide wisdom in guiding the student to make meaning of their trauma as "story makes sense of chaos" (Simmons, 2001). While faculty are not serving in a therapist role, receiving a student's story and then giving them support through connection to proper resources is a common model of the reciprocating self at work as the student is heard and the faculty practices boundaries of self while still caring for the student.

Aligning well with the literature on theological anthropology, this theme affirms the necessity of theological engagement within pedagogy for Christian higher educational contexts. Within this theme of increased mental health accommodations, trauma was mentioned as an area that participants had observed within their classrooms and had to figure out how to support their students in those moments. Seven of the thirteen participants mentioned trauma in the course of their interviews. Important to also note, seven of the participants named attending or being part of an institutional effort for "trauma-informed" care on their campus. In mentioning these institutional efforts, however, there were statements from the participants that indicated a level of newness to these initiatives as they would refer to "not knowing where to turn" or "who to contact" when they were supporting a student with a mental health crisis.

Theology and Trauma Healing

While trauma holds psychological implications, there are also theological implications caused by trauma or mental health on an individual. In the depths of trauma, there can be a “crisis of meaning at a deep level” (Boase and Frechette, 2016, p.51). What is stirred up when one’s sense of meaning is in crisis?

From a theological perspective, this may result in a person’s beliefs and worldview being altered or abandoned in light of the trauma they hold. In the Christian worldview, the representation of trauma in Scripture is often referenced in books like Lamentations and the Psalms, in which there is individual and communal naming of suffering and grief (Boase and Frechette, 2016, p.51). Further helping to emphasize the integral nature of psychology and theology for understanding trauma, Rambo (2010) states,

Trauma is the key to articulating a theology of redemption rather than the problem around which theology must navigate.... Trauma forces us beyond a familiar theological paradigm of life and death, and places us, instead, on the razed terrain of what remains. Trauma presses theologians to seek new language to express God’s relationship to the world (p.14).

Acknowledging the additional layer of Christian faculty to be mindful of the theological impact experienced by a student in the midst of trauma or mental health needs draws back to the distinct role many faculty hold in the whole person formation of their students. Helping students by integrating theology into pedagogy provides spaces for students to piece together fragmented stories of trauma, leading them towards, rather than away from, healing. For example, the benefits of a spiritual life can “help traumatized individuals interpret their experience in more

benign ways and begin to integrate it into their life narrative” (Park, Currier, Harris, and Slattery, 2017, p.46). If faculty can find meaningful ways to help students process and develop their narratives through the disciplines they offer, learning may become its own healing process for students and faculty (Lang, 2022). Knowing how to balance the invitation to receive student stories and when to refer to a mental health professional serves as a learning area as faculty tended to default to the sentiment, “I don’t know what I don’t know” when asked about feeling equipped to care well for students’ mental health in the classroom. The final theme highlighted the importance of faculty well-being for effective faculty pedagogy.

Impact of Faculty Well-Being on Faculty Pedagogy

Arising from participants’ more personal reflections on their teaching experiences, the theme of faculty well-being on pedagogy became evident. Factors also identified within this theme were the importance of boundaries for the faculty role, specifically as it relates to time management and student care; expressions of exhaustion in the role; and a theme of encouragement stemming from the support of colleagues for their well-being. Poignantly describing the state of fatigue expressed in this theme, Gwen elaborated about the teaching load at her institution:

I’ve noticed that faculty, because it’s not sustainable, will find shortcuts in order to make it through and, unfortunately, I think students get the short end of the stick ultimately. Because we’re just trying to survive. So yeah, going back to mental health, it’s like the opposite of what they need.

Gwen named a timely observation in stating that the workload of faculty may be too heavy as it relates to what students need from faculty. For the purposes of this study, Gwen’s remark draws attention to the potential “mismetings” (Buber, 1970) taking place with current

faculty expectations. Also within this theme of faculty well-being was the importance of boundaries. Boundaries were referred to in a protective nature as participants mostly associated it with time, while two participants referred to boundaries in the context of emotional boundaries. Referring to their time commitments, each participant commented on “having too much to do,” or “not having the time that’s needed to give quality attention to everything.” For those that referred to emotional boundaries, both of these participants taught courses that specifically engage mental health and trauma concepts in their classrooms, which tended to evoke vulnerable responses from students, sometimes triggering within themselves unresolved trauma. Howard’s (2016) transformationist pedagogical model invites the inclusion of boundaries through the reminder that educators must know themselves, which includes understanding their own mental health and well-being.

In the earlier description of the faculty role, the term complex was used to communicate the multi-faceted elements of serving as a professor in current times. Adding to those roles, faculty in Christian higher education hold to theological elements within their responsibilities to students. Mirroring the student experience, faculty have also experienced the acceleration of mental health needs brought on by the pandemic (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2021). This theme differed from the literature as there is limited research on the faculty experience of student mental health needs in the learning relationship. The discussion of the above themes helps to frame the following recommendations for faculty working in Christian higher education as they seek to sustain a theologically formed relational pedagogy while caring for students. The recommendations provided begin with restoring a faculty sense of well-being, restoring faculty sense of vocation, and the implementation of trauma-informed training with consideration for a future trauma-informed pedagogy.

Recommendations

Thinking through the following recommendations in an intentional, process-oriented order provides a pragmatic approach to the findings of this study. The recommendation of creatively providing resources and opportunities for sustained faculty care and the recommendation to explore trauma-informed pedagogy on college campuses will serve as practical applications of this study. These recommendations speak both to the faculty experience as well as the college student experience by addressing the mental health concerns named in this study. As evidenced by the themes of this study, faculty named recent experiences of exhaustion. Before exploring a recommendation of what faculty need to *do*, the reminder of who faculty *are* as humans created in the *imago Dei* is offered through a restoration of their sense of well-being as well as their sense of vocation.

Restoring Faculty Sense of Well-Being

The recommendation to creatively provide resources and opportunities for improved sustainability of the faculty experience speaks to the exhaustion and high value of boundaries within the theme of faculty well-being. The remarks surrounding time, from the faculty perspective, imply a felt limitation to their own ability to implement *thick* habits (Smith, 2009) within their work. The specific recommendation is for institutions to provide safe spaces for their faculty to process, reflect, and heal in the context of relationships. Offering insight to the need for processing spaces, Baldwin (2018) writes, “Communing with our external environments includes communing with our own perceptions, prior learnings, and physiological responses as we hope to move from reaction to interpretation to interrelational communication” (p.75).

As evidenced in their deep care for students, faculty participants named their students as the primary reason they went into teaching or the reason they have remained in their career. If

faculty are feeling “exhausted,” “fatigued,” or “burnt out,” how can they continue to care holistically for their students? The reciprocating self provides guidance to finding a felt sense of wholeness in the faculty role once again. Essential to the reciprocating self is the relationship between self and other, but also the relationship between self and the divine. In the work of Christian faculty, the spiritual life of professors cannot go unnoticed as this connection is paramount in the daily formation occurring between faculty-student interactions.

Before institutions can require brainstorming, vision casting, or other future-oriented requests, it is important to provide space and opportunities for faculty to remember they are created in divine likeness. The act of remembrance (Herman, 1997) for faculty healing provides an acknowledgement of the tensions, or even traumas, faculty are embodying because of the pandemic’s implications on their teaching experience – and, perhaps more importantly, considering the toll these stressors have taken on faculty’s personal and spiritual lives. A step towards such an offering can be inspired by the act of *re-membering* (Palmer, 2007). In order to receive the reality of student mental health implications, faculty are invited to do their own re-membering as a spiritual act of recognizing their own humanity as well as their students’. Parker Palmer (2007) provides an insightful invitation to educators through the act of *re-membering*. He writes:

Re-membering involves putting ourselves back together, recovering identity and integrity, reclaiming the wholeness of our lives. When we forget who we are, we do not merely drop some data. We *dis-member* ourselves, with unhappy consequences for our politics, our work, our hearts. Academics often suffer the pain of dismemberment...deeper down, this pain is more spiritual than sociological: it comes

from being disconnected from our own truth, from the passions that took us into teaching, from the heart that is the source of all good work (p.21).

The pandemic seemed to contribute significantly to the low morale named by the faculty participants, but there were other factors named as well – such as decreased student engagement, institutions not being able to pay faculty more competitive salaries, workload stressors, and enrollment pressures. When talking about faculty resources, Lucy shared about short-term faculty care attempts; while she appreciated the thought, she expressed frustration in the lack of a long-term plan, saying, “You [administration] have to help us change our jobs, to make them more sustainable, so that we can be the teachers that you want us to be.” How can administrators, or institutions as a whole, better support their faculty’s well-being? While administrators can contribute to providing systemic improvements for faculty well-being, faculty also need to consider how they can take ownership of their own well-being for sustainable futures in teaching.

Naming the significant need to address faculty well-being, specifically speaking on the topic of burn-out, Carrere and Kinder (2021) write, “Dragging yourself into work may mean your body shows up, but it also is a pretty good indicator that your heart will not. Students will notice, and students with trauma histories will become dysregulated with you” (p.233). How faculty show up in their classroom matters – this was a part of the pedagogical responses shared by participants as they identified the need to “create an environment” or to “set an encouraging tone” when they entered their class.

Extending the invitation, and providing the time for faculty to engage in routine reflection within the context of community relationships each semester could be a practical step toward addressing the importance of faculty well-being. Being mindful of the value of narrative

(Simmons, 2001) and remembering (Herman, 1997) for trauma healing, allowing spaces for hard conversations can also be life-giving as “the body keeps the score” (Van der Kolk, 2014) for which releasing story, memory, or emotion may help relieve felt tensions. Four of the thirteen participants began to cry as they shared about their workload or various frustrations that arose from the interview. There was an awareness that they did not feel heard in raising their frustrations about their role, particularly with the busyness brought to their campuses by pandemic adapting – an experience of “mismatching” (Buber, 1988).

Acknowledging healthy avenues for faculty to process and share their emotional responses to their work is another creative approach for helping to sustain faculty in their roles. As stated by Brueggemann (2018), “Jesus knew what we numb ones must always learn again: (a) that weeping must be real because endings are real; and (b) that weeping permits newness” (p.56). The implications of the value of relationships for faculty pedagogy are significant as faculty carry the stories, interactions, and responsibility for teaching, they also need to be continually attuned to their own relationships – with the divine, family, and others, beyond their students to also be developing as whole people in divine likeness.

Practically, as faculty mentioned feeling limited with their time, offering up opportunities for communal spiritual care as part of the workday for faculty culture can provide the restoration needed. For example, if an institution has the resources, providing an optional silent retreat built into each semester for faculty, eliminating the chaos of scheduling and planning their own retreat. Relating directly to the sense of exhaustion or burnout named by some participants, Lipsky (2018) teaches the art of “less distraction, more intention” when it comes to managing a sense of overwhelm. Addressing the tendency a person can have in a moment of overwhelm to choose distraction, Lipsky (2018) explains, “We can become so saturated by all that we

encounter that we become completely distracted from the very fundamentals” (p.65). As faculty named the effects of their workloads, increased student mental health accommodations, and lowered student engagement, there was an overarching acknowledgement of their capacity being stretched too thin. This was clearly evidenced through the change in their demeanor, stressed facial expressions, change in posture as they began talking about their to-do lists and calendars. Not having the tools or resources to healthily manage moments of overwhelm could leave faculty in a continual state of burnout. Lipsky’s (2018) recommendation is to practice being intentional:

The ability to be intentional about *what* we’re focusing on, *when*, and *how* can allow us to still move amid these modern times while not losing ourselves along the way.... Intention is like the banks of a river through which grace can flow (p.75).

Thinking theologically about intention, the wisdom of the Desert Fathers provides insight to the meaningful engagement of one’s relationship with the divine. On the importance of listening to God, Williams (2005) writes, “Deep down we are attuned to God, but we have jarred the harmonies in various ways. We are out of tune. The trouble then is that what we often listen to is the out-of-tuneness, the habits of self-protection and self-regard” (p.50). Perhaps an invitation as a campus community to engage in Sabbath practice, the act of “ceasing from that which is necessary to embrace that which brings life” (Buchanan, 2006, p.188), would provide opportunities for faculty to connect their relationship with the divine to their daily work.

The participants of this study all remarked on their limited time, feeling like they were pressed to fit in the administrative work expected of them in addition to preparing and teaching their courses. In the fullness of their workload, with the implications of pandemic shifts, it is possible that faculty are not slowing down enough to be attuned to their own needs. Writing on the experience of burnout, Nieuwhof (2018) explains, “Far too many of us end up compromised:

who we are no longer lines up with who we had hoped to be. And it happens so subtly that most of the time, we don't even know it's going on" (p.36). What are the subtle ways faculty may be falling into a similar experience? How can faculty, and the institutions they work for, creatively provide consistent outlets and avenues for self-care? Two recommendations are offered: consider creating "hearth spaces" on campus, and support faculty in managing their time.

A hearth space, described by Parks (2000), captures the essence of a created space for "humanizing practices." The importance, particularly in pandemic processing, of allowing faculty opportunities within their work to "keep life human" (Parks, 2000, p.154) serves as an avenue for faculty to engage the reciprocating self as colleagues, practicing and modeling what can then benefit students positively as faculty well-being is sustained. Explaining the idea of a hearth place, Parks shares, "Hearth places invite reflection within and among.... The dialogue of which we speak cannot usually be accomplished in fleeting soundbites. It requires something more like a hearthside conversation" (p.155).

The sentiment that "there is never enough time" was used by seven of the thirteen participants in relation to their workload. Pragmatically, what if institutions provided opportunities for faculty to compare, reevaluate, and balance their schedules? Perhaps part of the contributing factor to the named faculty exhaustion is the rhythms of academia. Faculty tend to work when students work and rest when students rest – having holidays and summers to recoup from the months of being "on." In his study about managing time in accordance with one's energy in a given day, Nieuwhof (2021) summarizes the issue in saying, "Time *off* won't heal you when the problem is how you spend your time *on*" (p.25). If vacation time is meant for recovering, then when are faculty actually vacationing – celebrating the art of play, joy, and rest? Where might faculty find their own opportunities for "hearthside" conversations in their work?

Exploring creative options for faculty scheduling and time management speaks to the daily efforts rather than the traditional model of storing up energy to survive until the next campus break.

As faculty are supported in their own journey toward well-being, they may find healing of self, which opens them more fully to the invitation before them of holistically caring for their students. The role of faculty on Christian campuses may be viewed with high regard when considering the privileged opportunity for faculty to so deeply pursue and integrate their faith with their pedagogy – and in fact, faculty at Christian institutions are called to do so. As participants spoke of students as the source of purpose in their roles, many of them demonstrated a noticeable shift in tone as they highlighted fond memories of former students or recounted stories of quality time spent with current students. These memories are a result of the openness experienced between faculty and student in understanding the theological anthropology of work – being human with one another in relationship with the divine. By the end of each participant interview, as faculty shared more deeply about their role, their students, and their own well-being, there was a noticeable heaviness. Sensing the need to leave the participants in a better state when concluding interviews, the question was asked, “What has kept you in your role and what do you enjoy most about your work?”

Simply by asking this question, all participants changed demeanor – smiling, sitting up, becoming more animated – and then they would provide positive-based responses about getting to be in relationship with their students as the joy of their work and the motivation to keep coming back year after year. Paralleling concepts of the reciprocating self, Muller (1999) speaks of becoming Sabbath for one another in order that rest may be found in the presence of one another. Muller elaborates by saying, “We become space, that our loved ones, the lost and

sorrowful, may find rest in us...not fixing, not harming, and not acting. Quietly empty, we become Sabbath” (p.183). This is worth noting and helped to inform the next recommendation of restoring sense of vocation within faculty. Inviting faculty to remember their vocation may provide opportunity for restored sense of purpose in their roles and pedagogy.

Restoring Faculty Sense of Vocation

Explaining the alternative to living as whole-selves, Au and Cannon (1995) name the aspects of the divided self, the experiences that are the “shadow-side” of wholeness. In speaking directly to the experience of overwork as a hindrance to wholeness, Au and Cannon (1995) state, “Work cannot help but fail us when we look to it alone to foster the wholeness that we seek” (p.95). Experienced outside of the context of vocation, work alone may struggle to produce a deeper sense of meaning. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas (2010) writes about his appreciation for the value of work in his memoir: “But I work because I love the work I have been given to do” (p.45). Hauerwas (2010) writes in his memoir about his vocation as a theologian and how he lived out this vocation in a variety of work roles in his life, always finding work a responsibility to be appreciated.

The role of vocation for faculty holds significance, as a return to the roots of their profession may inspire a restored or renewed commitment to the role of faculty within the context of theological anthropology, specifically remembering the *imago Dei*. Speaking directly to the topic of vocation for Christians, James K.A. Smith (2016) shares, “You are called to *image* God...but I think it’s important to hear this more as a verb than a noun – as a task and mission rather than a property or characteristic” (p.172). Faculty living as one formed in the *imago Dei* are able to mirror the image of God to their students and vice versa – leaning into the deep theological relationality present within the learning relationship.

The invitation is for faculty to shift their perspective of vocation as Palmer (2000) suggests in sharing his own reflections on vocation. Palmer writes, “I understand vocation quite differently – not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received.... Vocation comes from a voice ‘in here’ calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God” (p.10). Vocation is also something that can be called out and formed in others. Much like faculty do for their students, institutional leadership should consider opportunities to call their faculty to remember vocation and the goodness of their work. Describing the need for leadership within communities, Palmer (2007) explains that, “Good talk about good teaching is unlikely to happen if presidents and principals, deans and department chairs, and others who have influence without position do not *expect* it and *invite* it into being” (p. 161). How are faculty, as leaders, engaging vocation as a means of modeling for students?

Speaking to the nature of Christian education, Holmes (1975) describes that the integration of faith and learning is the realization that education is Christian vocation, which “must be an act of love, of worship, of stewardship, a wholehearted response to God” (p.49). Also acknowledging the theological components of education as vocation, Holmes (1975) summarizes, “to educate the whole person, to encourage disciplined learning and the quest for excellence is a sacred trust” (p.16). As faculty and institutions pursue well-being and explore opportunities for restored sense of vocation, faculty may then be better positioned to take on the task of learning and engaging in needed training around trauma-informed pedagogy as they learn to care in new ways for their students.

Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

Developing a greater awareness and understanding of mental health concerns and trauma needs among students will help inform faculty pedagogies to meet the changing needs of their

students. The theological foundation shared by many Christian campuses to care well for the “neighbor” demonstrates the commitment that is needed for faculty to embrace the importance of trauma-informed classrooms. This shift in pedagogy demonstrates to students that their faculty care beyond academic experience, providing a tangible step towards the holistic education desired within the Christian higher education context. The reciprocating relationship requires an awareness of and response to the need seen in the other which faculty can meet through seeking understanding of their students’ mental health needs.

While there is significant research and established practice of trauma-informed classrooms for K-12 educational levels, there is limited offering for the college student experience. Making an important distinction, Stephens (2020) highlights the necessity of a campus-wide effort when it comes to becoming a trauma-informed campus. Referring to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), the defining factors of being a trauma-informed institution can be identified by the four R’s: realization, recognition, response, and resists re-traumatization (SAMSHA, 2014). A campus that has a basic realization about trauma and its effects, recognizes the signs of trauma, and responds with a trauma-informed approach, meets the first three R’s of the SAMSHA (2014) model. Speaking specifically to the institution’s response, SAMSHA elaborates in stating that:

Staff in every part of the organization, from the person who greets clients at the door to the executives and the governance board, have changed their language, behaviors, and policies to take into consideration the experiences of trauma among children and adult users of the services and among staff providing the services (p.10).

Failure to commit to realize, recognize, and respond to trauma can lead to further harm within an individual. The last of the four R's is the commitment to resist re-traumatization by learning about the practices within their institution that may trigger traumatic memories for employees or students. This campus-wide approach requires faculty to serve as partners with all other offices attempting to support a student in their response to effects of trauma in their life (Stephens, 2020; Doughty, 2018; Hoch, Stewart, Webb, and Wyandt, 2015). Speaking directly to college faculty, Davidson (2017) explains, "The foundation for effective trauma-informed classroom practice is the educator's grasp of how trauma impacts students' behavior, development, relationships, and survival strategies" (p.17). The trauma-informed model shared is provided for a broad category of contexts and is not specific to Christian higher education. Attempting to bridge the gap between K-12 education and Christian higher education when it comes to trauma-informed practices, Stephens (2020) studied the importance of theological education and religious studies adopting the trauma-informed model. Stephens states his reason as a reminder that, "Trauma affects mind, body, and soul, causing the survivor to reassess who they are and who God is.... Previously held theologies of atonement and redemption may prove unhelpful or even false" (p.8). For faculty seeking to engage students in their exploration of faith, acknowledgment of trauma may help faculty identify with their students these moments of reassessing faith.

A model used for K-12 classroom contexts may also be applied to the college classroom. Carrere and Kinder (2021) succinctly describe the process of regulation, attunement, and attachment for the benefits of achievement. As faculty help to create spaces and opportunities for students to regulate – whether with deep breathing or other self-calming exercises – they are able to help students attune with others. Within this process, attunement is the "ability to be

responsive to one another, to tune into each other” (Carrere and Kinder, 2021, p.33). Similar to the notion of the reciprocating self in which faculty and student are responding to each other, attunement allows a student to “tune in” to the professor and learn from their cues the expected behavior for learning. When a student then feels safe within their learning environment and trusts their professor, this is the process of attachment. These safe connections help to foster the whole-person learning previously discussed. As faculty seek to engage their students, in the midst of mental health concerns or trauma effects, the ability to create safe spaces and safe connections provides a helpful way forward for faculty pedagogy (Carrere and Kinder, 2021; Olson, 2014; Phillips, Melim, and Hughes, 2020). Affirming the value of relationship for faculty pedagogy, the recognition that trauma-informed care provides the positive perspective that, “Every interaction we [teachers] have with them [students] shapes students’ perceptions of themselves and their place in the world” (Fisher, Frey, and Savitz, 2020, p.1).

Providing and creating a trauma-informed campus requires an institutional commitment beyond just the faculty. The opportunity to inform pedagogy with trauma-informed processes and care is present as student mental health continues to be an area of faculty concern, as evidenced by this study. Opportunities for faculty and their institutions to address faculty well-being, restore a sense of faculty vocation, and commit to trauma-informed practices serve as recommendations for a theological pedagogy for developing students holistically.

Chapter 6

This study sought to explore the impact of college student mental health concerns on faculty pedagogy through a qualitative research method. Thirteen participants from four different institutions were interviewed about their experience of college student mental health and its effects on their pedagogy. The themes of this research were the value of relationships for faculty pedagogy, a lowered sense of student engagement, an increase in student mental health accommodations, and the importance of faculty well-being on pedagogy.

The recommendations stemming from these themes resulted in suggestions for faculty and institutions to provide safe spaces for processing and improving faculty well-being, committing to creative avenues for restoring a sense of vocation within faculty work, and pursuing the training and implementation of trauma-informed practices within institutions as well as within faculty pedagogy.

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the use of a smaller representation of faith-based institutions. While there was consistency in experiences, adding a greater sample of institution type may help to provide a broader understanding of faculty's experience.

As this study sought to understand the implications of college student mental health concerns on faculty pedagogy, a second limitation is the structure of holding one interview with each participant. This may have limited the participant from sharing in greater detail about their experience, especially as faculty members engaged story telling for some of their responses, allotting a follow up interview may have deepened the themes presented.

Additionally, related to the unintended impact of the COVID-19 experience. While the study was not intentionally seeking out COVID-19 implications on faculty pedagogy, it was natural that participants shared at length about their individual experiences of the pandemic on their pedagogy. Despite not being a central focus of this study, the responses of participants around COVID-19 were still considered in the coding process, producing the subtheme of pandemic implications for faculty pedagogy.

Future Research

Considering the experience of faculty pedagogy, future research inviting faculty reflection on the formation and development of their pedagogy as it relates to theological foundations may helpfully contribute to the existing research. Reflecting on pedagogy was mentioned by one participant as something “they hadn’t done in ages.” Exploring how Christian institutions invite pedagogical reflection, in more recent context, provides future guidance in how to best equip and train faculty for the expectations of their role beyond content delivery.

Conversely, student engagement with faculty pedagogy serves as another helpful, comparative study to demonstrate how students experience their faculty’s well-being for example. A continued research focus on faculty pedagogy provides intentional forethought to the changing needs and learning relationships of college students. Future research may also help faculty in providing pragmatic ways to adjust their teaching as culture, students, and the Christian higher education landscape continues to change.

The naming of COVID-19 implications on faculty pedagogy presents one area of possible future research as it relates to faculty mental health needs. As many of the participants shared about their pandemic teaching experiences, it seemed there was a need for them to be provided a

space to process the experiences, maybe even the trauma, they hold around the last two years of their teaching career. Studying the specific implications for faculty pedagogy in a long-term context would provide helpful research in the coming years as the implications of the pandemic are still unfolding for faculty and students.

Lastly, as more institutions consider adopting a trauma-informed model on their campuses, research around the effectiveness and student response to the model would be helpful to determine how students are being helped and if there is an improvement in their overall mental health as a result of their years on a trauma-informed campus. Also within this recommendation for future research would be the inclusion of systemic changes observed by the institution's constituents after the implementation of trauma-informed practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the pandemic certainly had an effect on the experiences of participants, the research indicated a strong affirmation of the value of relationship for pedagogy for faculty teaching in a Christian context. The effects of lowered student engagement, increased mental health accommodations, and overall faculty well-being demonstrated how student mental health can influence faculty's pedagogy as they seek to adapt to the needs of their students. Relating the findings back to the literature, there is concentrated effort within Christian higher education to develop whole-persons through the integration of faith and learning. Faculty hold a privileged role in this mission as they serve not only as educators, but as spiritual guides and mentors too. Sustainable teaching requires faculty need to be attuned to their inner relationship with themselves, with the divine, and their students so that they can best care for their students in a mutual learning relationship. Therefore, integrating a framework of theological anthropology, the biblical understanding of what it means to be human in relationship with others and the

divine, serves as a relational pedagogy that includes, rather than avoids, the narratives of mental health concerns and traumas of students in the learning context.

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Appendix A - Participant Agreement Statement

I agree to participate in the above study, having read and understood the nature of the study. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary. I grant permission for the data obtained through the interview to be used by Katie Breitigan, primary researcher, in completing her doctoral dissertation in Restorative Theology through Evangelical Seminary, including future use of the research results in publications or professional presentations. I agree to have the interview audio recorded.

I understand that each participant, including myself, will be described as part of the methodology process for the study following best practices for anonymity and confidentiality of participant's identity. I agree to the use of a pseudonym for the protection of any identifying information.

At any point, should I become concerned about the study or have questions, I may contact Katie Breitigan to revisit my participation in the study. As this study asks me to recall past experiences which may trigger a deeper emotional response or recollection of past traumatic experiences in the classroom environment, I understand that I may contact Katie Breitigan if I should want a referral to a mental health professional as a result of my participation in this study. If at any point I feel that my questions are not sufficiently being answered by Katie, I may contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Janet Stauffer (janet.stauffer@evangelical.edu). It is also clear to me that I may withdraw my participation from the study at any point. Upon request, research results will be shared with me by the researcher.

After reading the above research components, I consent to be a participant in this study by signing below:

Participant Name: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Participant Information (Email)

Introduction

I am asking you to participate in a research study titled, *Impact of College Student Mental Health on Faculty Pedagogy in Christian College Classrooms*. I will describe the study to you as a participant in detail and provide the opportunity to receive and answer any questions you may have about the research. This study is being led by Katie Breitigan, Restorative Theology Doctorate of Theology Candidate at Evangelical Seminary. The faculty advisor for this student is Dr. Janet Stauffer, Evangelical Seminary Restorative Track Advisor.

About the Study

As college student mental health continues to be an increasingly concerning trend across many campuses, there continues to be a depth of research on the student experience but when looking at the faculty experience of student mental health, the span lessens in terms of available research. This study seeks to gather and understand how faculty members at Christian institutions have experienced the impact of college student mental health on their pedagogy in the context of the classroom. The hope of the study is to contribute to the conversation on college student mental health through the lens of the faculty classroom experience.

Participant Commitments

Participant commitments consist of agreeing to be recorded and engaging in a 60- 90-minute interview. The interview will be completed over the ZOOM. The ZOOM platform records audio and video of the interviews as well as produces a preliminary transcription the researcher will then review for typographical errors to ensure clarity of interpretation in the data analysis process. Participants will have the option to keep their video off if so desired for the entirety of the interview.

Risks

Risk to participants has been kept to a minimal level as all participants will be kept anonymous. Participants will be asked to provide a chosen pseudonym to be used by the researcher. Additionally, the institutions (employers) of the faculty participants will be given pseudonyms for an additional level of anonymity for the participants.

Benefits

The benefits to participants of this study exist within the results of representation. As faculty members share their experiences relating to the impact of student responses to trauma, the representation of their experience becomes better known in the midst of the existing research on the topic, which currently lacks sufficient supporting research.

Compensation for Participation

Participants will receive a thank-you gift valued at \$25.00. Participants will not be financially compensated.

Data Security

Interview recordings will be stored on a hard drive, which can only be accessed by the primary researcher. Recordings will be used for the sole purpose of the dissertation research. Once the dissertation research is concluded, including the final presentation, interviews and transcriptions will be deleted. All interviews will be kept protected through the duration of the research process and through completion of the doctoral degree process.

Future Use of Research

The researcher intends to use the research from this study to complete the requirements of the dissertation phase of the Doctorate of Theology program at Evangelical Seminary. The complete dissertation will be presented as a workshop at the Association of Christians in Student Development (ACSD) conference in 2022 in agreement with a research grant received for the study. As the research seeks to learn and understand faculty experiences, the outcomes of the research process may be shared on Christian college campuses as a resource for faculty to continue the conversation in their unique campus contexts. It may also be used to help inform student life or college administration about the experiences of faculty with the aim of building partnerships to care well for college students' mental health as well as equipping faculty in their college classroom experiences.

Appendix C – Interview Script

The following interview script will be provided to participants in advance of the interview date.

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

Participant (Pseudonym):

Participant Institution (Institution Pseudonym):

Zoom Recording (Audio Required/ Video optional) Acknowledged:

(5-10 Minutes) Introductions and Warm-Up:

- Interviewer Introduction
- Participant Introduction
- Interviewer Recap of project and interview protocol
- Warm Up 1: Ask Participant if they have any questions regarding the recording of the interview, Zoom issues, or the use of the interview.
- Interviewer: Provide refresher about purpose of study/interview as originally shared in participant invites.
- Warm Up 2: Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?

(50-60 Minutes) Primary Interview Questions:

- (Participant Context)
 - Tell me about yourself as a professor.
 - How long have you been in the role?
 - Type(s) of institution / number of years?
 - What department have you been teaching in?
 - Are your courses categorized as general education, upper-level, seminar class, etc.?
 - What is the typical class level of your courses – first-years/soph/juniors/seniors
 - Anything else about your career as a professor that helps to describe your teaching context?
- (Pedagogy) We are going to get more specific about your teaching experience and talk about pedagogy.
 - To get us started, I would be curious to learn how you would define “pedagogy.”
 - Can you explain your personal pedagogy?
 - Follow up about their definition to obtain understanding if needed.
 - What factors have specifically influenced the development of your pedagogy?
 - Can you describe how your personal teaching pedagogy shows in your daily teaching routines and interactions? Do you have specific examples to share?
 - Over your time as a professor, have you needed to adjust/adapt/alter your pedagogy to best achieve student-learning objectives? If so, how?

- If participants share that they have not needed to adapt, the researcher will follow up about how their pedagogy has endured the transitions of college student trends.
- (Classroom Observations)
 - Thinking about more recent years (the last 3-5 years), what have you observed about your students in the classroom setting? This could include student behavior, conversations, student requests, engagement levels, work load, test scores.
 - Across many college campuses, we continue to see a rise in student mental health concerns. In recent years (3-5 years) as a professor, can you tell me about your own experience as a professor with college student mental health?
 - Possible follow up: As participant shares, researcher will provide active listening cues to encourage depth of sharing, “can you tell me more about that experience? What feelings came up for you? Were you able to process that with anyone?”
 - Possible follow up: If participant does not have personal experience relating to college student mental health specifically, researcher will pursue follow up about how/if they have observed conversation on their campus about student mental health trends
- (Student Mental Health in Classroom)
 - Hearing about your observations of students in recent years is helpful to inform my understanding of your context. Thank you. We are going to make a transition to talk more specifically about the effect of student mental health in the classroom. To help guide our conversation and for the purposes of this study, I am going to define student mental health to be a student's response to an event that caused an interruption to a student's holistic well-being, causing a break-down in the student's understood sense of safety which is reinforced by neurological messaging within their body that continues to affirm a sense of threat.
 - How do you resonate with that explanation? Do you have any questions? Is further clarity needed in order to progress the conversation?
 - Based on your own experience as a professor, how have you observed student responses to mental health within your classroom setting?
 - If so, can you tell me more about what specifically you have observed?
 - If not, how might you imagine student mental health showing up in the classroom setting, considering the previously mentioned description?
 - Follow up active listening questions as appropriate.
 - We have talked about your observations of students' mental health in the classroom. I would like to explore the implications of student mental health on your pedagogy as a professor in the classroom by first asking you to reflect and respond to two questions.
 - Reflecting on the last 3-5 years of teaching at the college level, what have you found to be a continued challenge when it comes to the impact student mental health has held for your pedagogy?
 - Have you sought out / received support to address these challenges? How so? Examples?
 - Reflecting on the last 3-5 years of teaching at the college-level, have you changed any of your teaching practices to accommodate student mental

health? If so, what changed? Did you have resources to aid in the process of those changes?

- How did your students respond to your changes? How did you respond to the changes?
 - Thank you for sharing about these experiences. Is there anything you would like to add in relation to your understanding or experience of student mental health in the classroom before we transition into a conclusion of our time together?
- (Conclusion and Appreciation)
 - Again, thank you for your willingness to engage in this conversation and for your time today. I appreciate hearing more about your personal experience and value the responses you were able to share today. Going forward, I plan to include your responses in my formal dissertation research project. As a reminder, the recording will be stored securely and you are welcome to reach out at any point in the coming weeks, if you have follow up questions about this study. If you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study, please let me know and I would be glad to share them. This concludes our time and I will now stop the recording.